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**Spurgeon's
Sermons Volume 3:
1857**



Charles Spurgeon





Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 03: 1857

Author(s): Spurgeon, Charles Haddon (1834-1892)

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Description: Called the "Prince of Preachers," Charles Spurgeon was a world-renowned preacher. At the young age of 22, Spurgeon was already preaching to audiences of over 10,000 people. Coming from a Reformed Baptist tradition, he emphasized the gospels and the demands of Christ upon believers' lives in his sermons. This volume contains another 50 sermons, most of which were delivered by Spurgeon in 1857. This volume is part of a series, which allows one to read Spurgeon's sermons in chronological order. His sermons are never unduly complex or flowery, but immensely practical and encouraging. They are full of wit and concrete examples. Countless people throughout the world have profited from Spurgeon's moving words.

Tim Perrine

CCEL Staff Writer

This version also contains a scriptural index, for easy reference.

Subjects: Practical theology
Worship (Public and Private) Including the church year,
Christian symbols, liturgy, prayer, hymnology
Times and Seasons. The church year

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Faith

A Sermon

(No. 107)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 14, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”—[Hebrews 11:6](#).

THE OLD Assembly’s Catechism asks, “What is the chief end of man?” and its answer is, “To glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.” The answer is exceedingly correct; but it might have been equally truthful if it had been shorter. The chief end of man is “to please God;” for in so doing—we need not say it, because it is an undoubted fact—in so doing he will please himself. The chief end of man, we believe, in this life and in the next, is to please God his Maker. If any man pleases God, he does that which conduces most to his own temporal and eternal welfare. Man cannot please God without bringing to himself a great amount of happiness; for if any man pleases God, it is because God accepts him as his son, gives him the blessings of adoption, pours upon him the bounties of his grace, makes him a blessed man in this life, and insures him a crown of everlasting life, which he shall wear, and which shall shine with unfading lustre when the wreaths of earth’s glory have all been melted away; while, on the other hand, if a man does not please God, he inevitably brings upon himself sorrow and suffering in this life; he puts a worm and a rottenness in the core of all his joys; he fills his death-pillow with thorns, and he supplies the eternal fire with faggots of flame which shall for ever consume him. He that pleases God, is, through Divine grace, journeying onward to the ultimate reward of all those that love and fear God; but he who is ill-pleasing to God, must, for Scripture has declared it, be banished from the presence of God, and consequently from the enjoyment of happiness. If then, we be right in saying that to please God is to be happy, the one important question is, how can I please God? And there is something very solemn in the utterance of our text: “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” That is to say, do what you may, strive as earnestly as you can, live as excellently as you please, make what sacrifices you choose, be as eminent as you can for everything that is lovely and of good repute, yet none of these things can be pleasing to God unless they be mixed with faith. As the Lord said to the Jews, “With all your sacrifices you must offer salt;” so he says to us, “With all your doings you must bring faith, or else “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

This is an old law; it is as old as the first man. No sooner were Cain and Abel born into this world, and no sooner had they attained to manhood, than God gave a practical proclamation of this law, that “without faith it is impossible to please him.” Cain and Abel, one

bright day, erected an altar side by side with each other. Cain fetched of the fruits of the trees and of the abundance of the soil, and placed them upon his altar; Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock, and laid it upon his altar. It was to be decided which God would accept. Cain had brought his best, but he brought it without faith; Abel brought his sacrifice, but he brought it with faith in Christ. Now, then, which shall best succeed? The offerings are equal in value; so far as they themselves are concerned that are alike good. Upon which will the heavenly fire descend? Which will the Lord God consume with the fire of his pleasure? Oh! I see Abel's offering burning, and Cain's countenance has fallen, for unto Abel and unto his offering the Lord had respect, but unto Cain and his offering the Lord had no respect. It shall be the same till the last man shall be gathered into heaven. There shall never be an acceptable offering which has not been seasoned with faith. Good though it may be, as apparently good in itself as that which has faith, yet, unless faith be with it, God never can, and never will, accept it, for he here declares, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

I shall endeavour to pack my thoughts closely this morning, and be as brief as I can, consistently with a full explanation of the theme. I shall first have an *exposition* of what is faith; secondly, I shall have an *argument*, that without faith it is impossible to be saved; and thirdly, I shall ask a *question*—Have you that faith which pleases God? We shall have, then, an exposition, an argument, and a question.

I. First, for the EXPOSITION. What is faith?

The old writers, who are by far the most sensible—for you will notice that the books that were written about two hundred years ago, by the old Puritans, have more sense in one line than there is in a page of our new books, and more in a page than there is in a whole volume of our modern divinity—the old writers tell you, that faith is made up of three things: first knowledge, then assent, and then what they call affiance, or the laying hold of the knowledge to which we give assent, and making it our own by trusting in it.

1. Let us begin, then, at the beginning. The first thing in faith is *knowledge*. A man cannot believe what he does not know. That is a clear, self-evident axiom. If I have never heard of a thing in all my life, and do not know it, I cannot believe it. And yet there are some persons who have a faith like that of the fuller, who when he was asked what he believed, said, "I believe what the Church believes." "What does the Church believe?" "The Church believes what I believe." "And pray what do you and the Church believe?" "Why we both believe the same thing." Now this man believed nothing, except that the Church was right, but in what he could not tell. It is idle for a man to say, "I am a believer," and yet not to know what he believes; but yet I have seen some persons in this position. A violent sermon has been preached, which has stirred up their blood; the minister has cried, "Believe! Believe! Believe!" and the people on a sudden have got it into their heads that they were believers, and have walked out of their place of worship and said, "I am a believer." And if they were asked, "Pray what do you believe?" they could not give a reason for the hope that was in them.

They believe they intend to go to chapel next Sunday; they intend to join that class of people; they intend to be very violent in their singing and very wonderful in their rant; therefore they believe they shall be saved; but what they believe they cannot tell. Now, I hold no man's faith to be sure faith unless he knows what he believes. If he says, "I believe," and does not know what he believes, how can that be true faith? The apostle has said, "How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without a preacher? and how can they preach except they be sent?" It is necessary, then, to true faith, that a man should know something of the Bible. Believe me, this is an age when the Bible is not so much thought of as it used to be. Some hundred years ago the world was covered with bigotry, cruelty, and superstition. We always run to extremes, and we have just gone to the other extreme now. It was then said, "One faith is right, down with all others by the rack and by the sword." now it is said, "However contradictory our creeds may be, they are all right." If we did but use our common sense we should know that it is not so. But some reply, "Such-and-such a doctrine need not be preached and need not be believed." Then, sir, if it need not be preached, it need not be revealed. You impugn the wisdom of God, when you say a doctrine is unnecessary; for you do as much as say that God has revealed something which was not necessary, and he would be as unwise to do more than was necessary, as if he had done less than was necessary. We believe that every doctrine of God's Word ought to be studied by men, and that their faith should lay hold of the whole matter of the Sacred Scriptures, and more especially upon all that part of Scripture which concerns the person of our all-blessed Redeemer. There must be some degree of knowledge before there can be faith. "Search the Scriptures," then, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ;" and by searching and reading cometh knowledge, and by knowledge cometh faith, and through faith cometh salvation.

2. But a man may know a thing, and yet not have faith. I may know a thing, and yet not believe it. Therefore *assent* must go with faith: that is to say, what we know we must also agree unto, as being most certainly the verity of God. Now, in order to faith, it is necessary that I should not only read the Scriptures and understand them, but that I should receive them in my soul as being the very truth of the living God, and I should devoutly with my whole heart receive the whole of the Scripture as being inspired of the Most High, and the whole of the doctrine which he requires me to believe to my salvation. You are not allowed to halve the Scriptures, and to believe what you please; you are not allowed to believe the Scripture with a half-heartedness, for if you do this wilfully, you have not the faith which looks alone to Christ. True faith gives its full assent to the Scriptures; it takes a page and says, "No matter what is in the page, I believe it;" it turns over the next chapter and says, "Herein are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable do wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their destruction; but hard though it be, I believe it." It sees the Trinity; it cannot understand the Trinity in Unity, but it believes it. It

sees an atoning sacrifice; there is something difficult in the thought, but it believes it; and whatever it be which it sees in revelation, it devoutly puts its lips to the book, and says, "I love it all; I give my full, free and hearty assent to every word of it, whether it be the threatening or the promise, the proverb, the precept, or the blessing. I believe that since it is all the Word of God it is all most assuredly true." Whosoever would be saved must know the Scriptures, and must give full assent unto them.

3. But a man may have all this, and yet not possess true faith; for the chief part of faith lies in the last head, namely, in an *affiance* to the truth; not the believing it merely, but the taking hold of it as being ours, and in the resting on it for salvation. Recumbency on the truth was the word which the old preachers used. You will understand that word. Leaning on it; saying, "This is truth, I trust my salvation on it." Now, true faith, in its very essence rests in this—a leaning upon Christ. It will not save me to know that Christ is a Saviour; but it will save me *to trust* him to be *my* Saviour. I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come by believing that his atonement is sufficient, but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge, and my all. The pith, the essence of faith lies in this—a casting one-self on the promise. It is not the lifebuoy on board the ship that saves the man when he is drowning, nor is it his belief that it is an excellent and successful invention. No! He must have it around his loins, or his hand upon it, or else he will sink. To use an old and hackneyed illustration: suppose a fire in the upper room of a house, and the people gathered in the street. A child is in the upper story: how is he to escape? He cannot leap down—that were to be dashed to pieces. A strong man comes beneath, and cries, "Drop into my arms." It is a part of faith to know that the man is there; it is another part of faith to believe that the man is strong; but the essence of faith lies in the dropping down into the man's arms. That is the proof of faith, and the real pith and essence of it. So, sinner, thou art to know that Christ died for sin; thou art also to understand that Christ is able to save, and thou art to believe that; but thou art not saved, unless in addition to that, thou puttest thy trust in him to be thy Saviour, and to be thine for ever. As Hart says in his hymn, which really expresses the gospel—

"Venture on him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

This is the faith which saves; and however unholy may have been your lives up to this hour, this faith, if given to you at this moment, will blot out all your sins, will change your nature, make you a new man in Christ Jesus, lead you to live a holy life, and make your eternal salvation as secure as if an angel should take you on his bright wings this morning, and carry you immediately to heaven. Have you that faith? That is the one all-important question; for while with faith men are saved, without it men are damned. As Brooks hath

said in one of his admirable works, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved, be his sins never so many; but he that believeth not in the Lord Jesus must be damned, be his sins never so few." Hast thou faith? For the text declares, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

II. And now we come to the ARGUMENT,—why, without faith, we cannot be saved.

Now there are some gentlemen present who are saying, "Now we shall see whether Mr. Spurgeon has any logic in him." No, you won't, sirs, because I never pretended to exercise it. I hope I have the logic which can appeal to men's hearts; but I am not very prone to use the less powerful logic of the head, when I can win the heart in another manner. But if it were needful, I should not be afraid to prove that I know more of logic and of many other things than the little men who undertake to censure me. It were well if they knew how to hold their tongues, which is at least a fine part of rhetoric. My argument shall be such as I trust will appeal to the heart and conscience, although it may not exactly please those who are always so fond of syllogistic demonstration—

"Who could a hair divide

Between the west and north-west side."

1. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." And I gather it from the fact that there never has been the case of a man recorded in Scripture who did please God without faith. The 11th chapter of Hebrews is the chapter of the men who pleased God. Listen to their names: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice;" "By faith Enoch was translated;" "By faith Noah built an ark;" "By faith Abraham went out into a place that he should afterwards receive;" "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise;" "By faith Sarah bare Isaac;" "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac;" "By faith Moses gave up the wealth of Egypt;" "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob;" "By faith Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph;" "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel;" "By faith the Red Sea was dried up;" "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down;" "By faith the harlot Rahab was saved;" "And what more shall I say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." But all these were men of faith. Others mentioned in Scripture, have done something; but God did not accept them. Men have humbled themselves, and yet God has not saved them. Ahab did, and yet his sins were never forgiven. Men have repented, and yet have not been saved, because their's was the wrong repentance. Juda repented, and went and hanged himself, and was not saved. Men have confessed their sins, and have not been saved. Saul did it. He said to David, "I have sinned against thee, my son David;" and yet he went on as he did before. Multitudes have confessed the name of Christ, and have done many marvellous things, and yet they have never been pleasing to God, from this simple reason, that they had not faith. And if there be not one mentioned in Scripture, which is the history of some

thousand years, it is not likely that in the other two thousand years of the world's history there would have been one, when there was not one during the first four thousand.

2. But the next argument is, *faith is the stooping grace*, and nothing can make a man stoop without faith. Now, unless man does stoop, his sacrifice cannot be accepted. The angels know this. When they praise God, they do it veiling their faces with their wings. The redeemed know it. When they praise God, they cast their crowns before his feet. Now, a man who has not faith proves that he cannot stoop; for he has not faith for this reason, because he is too proud to believe. He declares he will not yield his intellect, he will not become a child and believe meekly what God tells him to believe. He is too proud, and he cannot enter heaven, because the door of heaven is so low that no one can enter in by it unless they will bow their heads. There never was a man who could walk into salvation erect. We must go to Christ on our bended knees; for though he is a door big enough for the greatest sinner to come in, he is a door so low that men must stoop if they would be saved. Therefore it is that faith is necessary, because a want of faith is certain evidence of absence of humility.

3. But now for other reasons. Faith is necessary to salvation, because we are told in Scripture that *works cannot save*. To tell a very familiar story, and even the poorest may not misunderstand what I say: a minister was one day going to preach. He climbed a hill on his road. Beneath him lay the villages, sleeping in their beauty, with the corn-fields motionless in the sunshine; but he did not look at them, for his attention was arrested by a woman standing at her door, and who, upon seeing him, came up to him with the greatest anxiety, and said, "O sir, have you any keys about you? I have broken the key of my drawers, and there are some things I must get directly." Said he, "I have no keys." She was disappointed, expecting that everyone would have some keys. "But suppose," he said, "I had some keys, they might not fit your lock, and therefore you could not get the articles you want. But do not distress yourself, wait till some one else comes up. But," said he, wishing to improve the occasion, "have you ever heard of the key of heaven?" "Ah! yes," she said, "I have lived long enough, and I have gone to Church long enough, to know that if we work hard and get our bread by the sweat of our brow, and act well towards our neighbours, and behave, as the catechism says, lowly and reverently to all our betters, and if we do our duty in that station of life in which it has pleased God to place us, and say our prayers regularly, we shall be saved." "Ah!" said he, "my good woman, that is a broken key, for you have broken the commandments, you have not fulfilled all your duties. It is a good key, but you have broken it." "Pray, sir," said she, believing that he understood the matter, and looking frightened, "What have I left out?" "Why," said he, the key of heaven is at his girdle; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth?" And explaining it more fully to her, he said, "It is Christ, and Christ alone, that can open heaven to you, and not your good works." "What, minister," said she, "are our good works useless then?" "No," said he, "not after faith. If you believe first, you may have as many good works as you please; but if you

believe, you will never trust in them, for if you trust in them you have spoiled them, and they are not good works any longer. Have as many good works as you please, still put your trust wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ, for if you do not, your key will never unlock heaven's gate." So then, my hearers, we must have true faith, because the old key of works is so broken by us all, that we never shall enter Paradise by it. If any of you pretend that you have no sins, to be very plain with you, you deceive yourselves, and the truth is not in you. If you conceive that by your good works you shall enter heaven, never was there a more fell delusion, and you shall find at the last great day, that your hopes were worthless, and that, like sear leaves from the autumn trees, your noblest doings shall be blown away, or kindled into a flame within you yourselves must suffer for ever. Take heed of your good works; get them after faith, but remember, the way to be saved is simply to believe in Jesus Christ.

4. Again: without faith it is impossible to be saved, and to please God, because without faith there is *no union to Christ*. Now, union to Christ, is indispensable to our salvation. If I come before God's throne with my prayers, I shall never get them answered, unless I bring Christ with me. The Molossians of old, when they could not get a favour from their king, adopted a singular expedient; they took the king's only son in their arms, and falling on their knees cried, "O king, for thy son's sake, grant our request." He smiled and said, "I deny nothing to those who plead my son's name." It is so with God. He will deny nothing to them man who comes, having Christ at his elbow; but if he comes alone he must be cast away. Union to Christ is, after all, the great point in salvation. Let me tell you a story to illustrate this: the stupendous falls of Niagara have been spoken of in every part of the world; but while they are marvellous to hear of, and wonderful as a spectacle, they have been very destructive to human life, when by accident any have been carried down the cataract. Some years ago, two men, a bargeman and a collier, were in a boat, and found themselves unable to manage it, it being carried so swiftly down the current that they must both inevitably be borne down and dashed to pieces. Persons on the shore saw them, but were unable to do much for their rescue. At last, however, one man was saved by floating a rope to him, which he grasped. The same instant that the rope came into his hand a log floated by the other man. The thoughtless and confused bargeman instead of seizing the rope laid hold on the log. It was a fatal mistake; they were both in imminent peril, but the one was drawn to shore because he had a connection with the people on the land, whilst the other, clinging to the log, was borne irresistibly along, and never heard of afterwards. Do you not see that here is a practical illustration? Faith is a connection with Christ. Christ is on the shore, so to speak, holding the rope of faith, and if we lay hold of it with the hand of our confidence, he pulls us to shore; but our good works having no connection with Christ, are drifted along down the gulf of fell despair. Grapple them as tightly as we may, even with hooks of steel, they cannot avail us in the least degree. You will see, I am sure, what I wish to show to you. Some object to anecdotes; I shall use them till they have done objecting to them. The truth is

never more powerfully set forth to men than by telling them, as Christ did, a story of a certain man with two sons, or a certain householder who went a journey, divided his substance, and gave to some ten talents, to another one.

Faith, then, is an union with Christ. Take care you have it; for if not, cling to your works, and there you go floating down the stream! Cling to your works, and there you go dashing down the gulf! Lost because your works have no hold on Christ and no connection with the blessed Redeemer! But thou, poor sinner, with all thy sin about thee, if the rope is round thy loins, and Christ has hold of it, fear not!

“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.”

5. Just one more argument, and then I have done with it. “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” because it *is impossible to persevere in holiness without faith*. What a multitude of fair-weather Christians we have in this age! Many Christians resemble the nautilus, which in fine smooth weather swims on the surface of the sea, in a splendid little squadron, like the mighty ships; but the moment the first breath of wind ruffles the waves, they take in their sails and sink into the depths. Many Christians are the same. In good company, in evangelical drawing-rooms, in pious parlors, in chapels and vestries, they are tremendously religious; but if they are exposed to a little ridicule, if some should smile at them and call them methodist, or presbyterian, or some name of reproach, it is all over with their religion till the next fine day. Then when it is fine weather, and religion will answer their purpose, up go the sails again, and they are as pious as before. Believe me, that kind of religion is worse than irreligion. I do like a man to be thoroughly what he is—a downright man; and if a man does not love God, do not let him say he does; but if he be a true Christian, a follower of Jesus, let him say it and stand up for it; there is nothing to be ashamed of in it; the only thing to be ashamed of is to be hypocritical. Let us be honest to our profession, and it will be our glory. Ah! what would you do without faith in times of persecution? You good and pious people that have no faith, what would you do if the stake were again erected in Smithfield, and if once more the fires consumed the saints to ashes—if the Lollards’ toward were again opened, if the rack were again piled, or if even the stocks were used, as they have been used by a Protestant Church as witness the persecution of my predecessor, Benjamin Keach, who was once set in the stocks at Aylesbury, for writing a book against infant baptism. If even the mildest form of persecution were revived, how would the people be scattered abroad! And some of the shepherds would be leaving their flocks. Another anecdote now, and I hope it will lead you to see the necessity of faith, while it may lead me on insensibly to the last part of my discourse. A slaveholding American on one occasion buying a slave, said to the person of whom he was purchasing him, “Tell me honestly what are his faults.”

Said the seller, "He has no faults that I am aware of but one, and that one is, he will pray." "Ah!" said the purchaser, "I don't like that, but I know something that will cure him of it pretty soon." So the next night Cuffey was surprised by his master in the plantation, while in earnest prayer, praying for his new master, and his master's wife and family. The man stood and listened, but said nothing at that time; but the next morning he called Cuffey, and said, "I do not want to quarrel with you, my man, but I'll have no praying on my premises: so you just drop it." "Massa," said he "me canna leave off praying; me must pray." "I'll teach you to pray, if you are going to keep on at it." "Massa, me must keep on." "Well, then, I'll give you five-and-twenty lashes a day till you leave off." "Massa, if you give me fifty, I must pray." "If that's the way you are saucy to your master, you shall have it directly." So tying him up he gave him five-and-twenty lashes, and asked him if he would pray again. "Yes, massa, me must pray always, me canna leave off." The master look astonished; he could not understand how a poor saint could keep on praying, when it seemed to do no good, but only brought persecution upon him. He told his wife of it. His wife said, "Why can't you let the poor man pray? He does his work very well; you and I do not care about praying, but there's no harm in letting him pray, if he gets on with his work." "But I don't like it," said the master, "he almost frightened me to death. You should see how he looked at me." "Was he angry?" "No, I should not have minded that; but after I had beaten him, he looked at me with tears in his eyes, but as if he pitied me more than himself." That night the master could not sleep; he tossed to and fro on his bed, his sins were brought to his remembrance; he remembered he had persecuted a saint of God. Rising in his bed, he said, "Wife, will you pray for me?" "I never prayed in my life," said she "I cannot pray for you." "I am lost," he said, "if somebody does not pray for me; I cannot pray for myself." "I don't know any one on the estate that knows how to pray, except Cuffey," said his wife. The bell was rung, and Cuffey was brought in. Taking hold of his black servant's hand, the master said, "Cuffey, can you pray for your master?" "Massa," said he, "me been praying for you eber since you flogged me, and me mean to pray always for you." Down went Cuffey on his knees, and poured out his soul in tears, and both husband and wife were converted. That negro could not have done this without faith. Without faith he would have gone away directly, and said, "Massa, me leave off praying; me no like de white man's whip." But because he persevered through his faith, the Lord honored him, and gave him his master's soul for his hire.

III. And now in conclusion, THE QUESTION, the vital question. Dear hearer, have you faith? Dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart? If so, thou mayest hope to be saved. Ay, thou mayest conclude with absolute certainty that thou shalt never see perdition. Have you faith? Shall I help you to answer that question? I will give you three tests, as briefly as ever I can, not to weary you, and then farewell this morning. He that has faith has renounced his own righteousness. If thou putttest one atom of trust in thyself thou

hast no faith; if thou dost place even a particle of reliance upon anything else but what Christ did, thou hast no faith. If thou dost trust in thy works, then thy works are anti-christ, and Christ and anti-christ can never go together. Christ will have all or nothing; he must be a whole Saviour, or none at all. If, then, you have faith, you can say,

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling.”

The true faith may be known by this, that it begets a great esteem, for the person of Christ. Dost thou love Christ? Couldst thou die for him? Dost thou seek to serve him? Dost thou love his people? Canst thou say,

“Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to my ear.”

Oh! if thou dost not love Christ thou dost not believe in him; for to believe in Christ begets love. And yet more: he that has true faith will have true obedience. If a man says he has faith, and has no works, he lies; if any man declares that he believes on Christ, and yet does not lead a holy life, he makes a mistake; for while we do not trust in good works, we know that faith always begets good works. Faith is the father of holiness, and he has not the parent who loves not the child. God's blessings are blessings with both his hands. In the one hand he gives pardon; but in the other hand he always gives holiness; and no man can have the one unless he has the other.

And now, dear hearers, shall I down upon my knees, and entreat you for Christ's sake to answer this question in your own silent chamber: Have you faith? Oh! answer it, Yes, or No. Leave off saying, “I do not know,” or “I do not care.” Ah! you *will* care, one day, when the earth is reeling, and the world is tossing to and fro; ye will care when God shall summon you to judgment, and when he shall condemn the faithless and the unbelieving. Oh! that ye were wise—that ye would care now, and if any of you feel your need of Christ, let me beg of you, for Christ's sake, now to seek faith in him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission, and who, if he has given you repentance, will give you remission too. Oh sinners, who know your sins! “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and ye shall be saved.” Cast yourselves upon his love and blood, his doing and his dying, his miseries and his merits; and if you do this you shall never fall, but you shall be saved now, and saved in that great day when not to be saved will be horrible indeed. “Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Lay hold on him, touch the hem of his garment, and ye shall be healed. May God help you so to do; for Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

The Question of Fear and the Answer of Faith

A Sermon

(No. 108)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, August 31, 1856, by the

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at Exeter Hall, Strand.

“Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.”—[Job 23:6](#).

I SHALL not to-night consider the connexion of these words, or what was particularly intended by Job. I shall use them in, perhaps, another sense from that which he intended. No doubt Job meant to say, that if God would allow him to argue his case before him, it was his firm belief that God, so far from taking advantage of his superior strength in the controversy, would even strengthen him, that the controversy might be fair, and that the judgment might be unbiassed. “He would not plead against me with his great strength; no, but he would put strength in me.” We shall use the text, however, to-night, in another sense.

It is one of the sure marks of a lost and ruined state when we are careless and indifferent concerning God. One of the peculiar marks of those who are dead in sin is this: they are the wicked who forget God. God is not in all their thoughts; “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.” The sinful man is ever anxious to keep out of his mind the very thought of the being, the existence, or the character of God; and so long as man is unregenerate, there will be nothing more abhorrent to his taste, or his feelings, than anything which deals with the Divine Being. God perhaps, as Creator, he may consider; but the God of the Bible, the infinite Jehovah, judging righteously among the sons of men—condemning and acquitting—that God he has no taste for, he is not in all his thoughts, nor does he regard him. And mark you, it is a blessed sign of the work of grace in the heart, when man begins to consider God. *He* is not far from God’s heart who hath meditations of God in his own heart. If we desire to seek after God, to know him, to understand him, and to be at peace with him, it is a sign that God has dealings with our soul, for otherwise we should still have hated his name and abhorred his character.

There are two things in my text, both of which have relation to the Divine Being. The first is, *the question of fear*: “Will he plead against me with his great power?” and the second is, *the answer of faith*: “No, but he will put strength in me.” The fearful and the prayerful, who are afraid of sin and fear God, together with those who are faithful and believe in God, are in a hopeful state; and hence, both the question of the one, and the answer of the other, have reference to the great Jehovah, our God, who is for ever to be adored.

I. We shall consider, in the first place, to-night THE INQUIRY OF FEAR: “Will he plead against me with his great power?” I shall consider this as a question asked by the

convinced sinner. He is seeking salvation, but, when he is bidden to come before his God and find mercy, he is compelled by his intense anxiety to make the trembling inquiry, "Will he plead against me with his great power?"

1. And, first, I gather from this question the fact that *a truly penitent sinner has a right idea of many of God's attributes*. He does not understand them all, for instance, he does not yet know God's great mercy; he does not yet understand his unbounded compassion; but so far as his knowledge of God extends, he has an extremely correct view of him. To him the everlasting Jehovah appears GREAT in every attribute, and action, and supremely GREAT in his Majesty. The poor worldling knows there is a God; but he is to him a little God. As for the justice of God, the mere worldly man scarcely ever thinks of it. He considers that there is a God, but he regards him as a Being who has little enough respect for justice. Not so, however, the sinner. When God has once convinced him of his sin, he sees God as a *great* God, a God of *great* justice, and of *great* power. Whoever can misunderstand God's great justice or God's great power, a convinced sinner never will. Ask him what he thinks of God's justice, and he will tell you it like the great mountains; it is high, he cannot attain unto it. "Ah," saith he, "God's justice is very mighty; it *must* smite me. He *must* hurl an avalanche of woe upon my devoted head. Justice demands that he should punish me. I am so great a sinner that I cannot suppose he would ever pass by my transgression, my iniquity, and my sin." It is all in vain for you to tell such a man that God is little in his justice; he replies, "No," most solemnly, "No," and you can most plainly read his earnestness in his visage, when he replies, "No." He replies, "I feel that God is just; I am even now consumed by his anger; by his wrath am I troubled." "Tell me God is not just," says he; "I know he is; I feel that within an hour or two hell must swallow me up, unless Divine mercy delivers me. Unless Christ shall wash me in his blood, I feel I can never hope to stand among the ransomed." He has not that strange idea of God's justice that some of you have. You think sin is a trifle! You suppose that one brief prayer will wipe it all away. You dream that by attendance at your churches and at your chapels, you will wash away your sins. You suppose that God, for some reason or other, will very easily forgive your sin. But you have no right idea of God's justice. You have not learned that God never does forgive until he has first punished, and that if he does forgive any one, it is because he has punished Christ first in the stead of that person. But he never forgives without first exacting the punishment. That would be an infringement on his justice; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? You have, many of you, lax enough ideas of the justice of the Divine Being; but not so the sinner who is laboring under a knowledge of sin.

An awakened soul feels that God is greatly *powerful*. Tell him that God is but a weak God, and he will answer you; and shall I tell you what illustrations he will give you, to prove that God is great in power. He will say, "Oh, sir, God is great in power as well in justice; look up yonder: can you not see in the dark past, when rebel angels sinned against God,

they were so mighty that each one of them might have devastated Eden and shaken the earth. But God, with ease, hurled Satan and the rebel angels out of heaven, and drove them down to hell.” “Sir,” saith the sinner, “is he not mighty?” And then he will go on to tell you how God unbound the swaddling bands of the great ocean, that it might leap upon the earth; and how he bade it swallow up the whole of mortal race, save those who were hidden in the ark. And the sinner says, with his eyes well nigh starting from their sockets, “Sir, does not this prove that he is great in power, and will by no means acquit the wicked?” And then he proceeds, “Look again at the Red Sea; mark how Pharaoh was enticed into its depths, and how the parted sea, that stood aloof for awhile to give the Israelites an easy passage, embraced with eager joy, locked the adverse host within their arms, and swallowed them up quick;” and as he thinks he sees the Red Sea rolling o’er the slain, he exclaims, “Sir, God is great in power; I feel he must be, when I think of what he has done.” And as if he had not finished his oration, and would let us know the whole of the greatness of God’s power, he continues his narration of the deeds of vengeance. “O sir, remember, he must be great in power, for I know that he hath digged a hell, which is deep and large, without bottom. He hath made a Tophet—the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it.” “Yes, beyond a doubt,” groans the trembling soul, “he must be great in power. I feel he is, and I feel more than that; I feel that justice has provoked God’s arm of power to smite *me*, and unless *I* am covered in that righteousness of Christ, *I* shall ere long be dashed to pieces, and utterly devoured by the fury of his wrath.” The sinner, as far as the harsher attributes of God’s nature are concerned, when he is under conviction, has a very fair and a just idea of the Divine Being, though, as I have remarked before, not yet understanding the mercy and the infinite compassion of God towards his covenant people, he has too harsh a view of God, dwelling only upon the darker side, and not upon those attributes which shed a more cheering light upon the darkness of our misery. That is the first truth which I glean from the text.

2. The second truth which I gather from this question, “Will he plead against me with his great power?” is this: *that the trembling sinner feels that every attribute of God is against him as a sinner.* “Oh!” he will say, “I look to *God*, and I can see nothing in him but a consuming fire. I look to his *justice*, and I see it, with sword unsheathed, ready to smite me low. I look to his *power*, and I behold it, like a mighty mountain, tottering to its fall, to crush me. I look to his *immutability*, and methinks I see stern justice written on its brow, and I hear it cry, ‘Sinner, I will not save, I will condemn thee.’ I look to his *faithfulness*, and I mark that all his threatenings are as much ‘yea and amen’ as his promises. I look to his *love*, but even his love frowns, and accuses me, saying, ‘thou hast slighted me.’ I look to his *mercy*, but even his mercy launches out the thunderbolt, with accusing voice, reminding me of my former hardness of heart, and harshly chiding me thus, ‘Go thou to justice, and glean what thou canst there. I, even I, am against thee, for thou hast made me wroth!’”

Oh! trembling penitent, where art thou to-night? Somewhere here, I know thou art. Would to God there were many like thee! I know thou wilt agree with me in this statement, for thou hast a dread apprehension that every attribute of the Divine Being's character is armed with fire and sword to destroy thee. Thou seest all his attributes like heavy pieces of ordnance, all pointed at thee and ready to be discharged. Oh that thou mayest find a refuge in Christ! And oh! ye who never were convinced of sin, let me for one moment lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet. Know ye this—perhaps ye laugh at it—that all God's attributes are against you, if you are not in Christ! If you are not sheltered beneath the wings of Jesus, there is not one single glorious name of God, nor one celestial attribute, which does not curse you. What wouldst thou think, if at thy door to-night there should be planted great pieces of heavy cannon, all loaded, to be discharged against thee? But dost thou know, that where thou sittest to-night there are worse than heavy cannons to be discharged at thee? Yes, I see them, I see them! There is God's justice, and there is the angel of vengeance, standing with the match, ready to bid it hurl vengeance at thee. There is his power; there is his bare arm, ready to break thy bones, and crush thee into powder. There is his love, all blazing, turned to hate because thou hast rejected it; and there is his mercy, clad with mail, going forth like a warrior to overthrow thee. What sayest thou, O sinner, to-night? Against thee all God's attributes are pointed. He hath bent his bow and made it ready. The sword of the Lord has been bathed in heaven; it is bright and sharp; it is furbished. How wilt thou escape, when a mighty arm shall bring it down upon thee? or how wilt thou flee, when he shall draw his bow and shoot his arrows at thee, and make thee a mark for all the arrows of his vengeance? Beware, beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver! For tear you in pieces, he will yet, unless you shelter in the Rock of Ages, and wash yourselves in the stream of his wondrous blood. Fly to him, then, ye chief of sinners, fly. But if ye will not, now ye this, God is against you! He will plead against thee with his great power, unless thou hast our all-glorious Jesus to be thine advocate.

3. And just one more hint here. The sinner, when he is labouring on account of guilt, feels that God would be just if he were to "*plead against him with his great power?*" "Oh," saith he, "If I go to God in prayer, perhaps instead of hearing me he will crush me as I would a moth." What, soul, would he be just if he did that? "Ay," saith the sinner, "just, supremely just. Perhaps I shall have stripped myself of all my ornaments, and like a naked one have flown to him; perhaps then he will lash me harder than before, and I shall feel it all the worse for this my nakedness." And will he be just, should the flagellation of his vengeance fall upon thy shoulders? "Yes," he saith, "infallibly just." And should he smite thee to the lowest hell, would he be just? "Yes," saith the penitent, "just, infinitely just. I should have no word to say against him. I should feel that I deserved it all. My only question is, not whether he would be just to do it, but *will* he do it?" "Will he plead against me with his great power?" This is the question of fear. Some here, perhaps, are asking that question.

Now let them hear the reply of faith; God give them a good deliverance!

II. THE REPLY OF FAITH IS, "No." O sinner, hear that word, "No;" there are sonnets condensed into it. "Will he plead against me with his great power?" "No, no," say the saints in heaven; "no," say the faithful on earth; "no," say the promises; "no," unanimously exclaim the oracles of Scripture; no, most emphatically no, he will not plead against you with his great power, but he will put strength into you.

1. And here we make a similar remark to that with which we commenced the former part of the sermon, namely, this: *the fearful soul has a very right view of God in many respects, but the faithful soul has a right view of God in all respects.* He that hath faith in God knows more of God better than any man. Why, if I believe God, I can see all his attributes vindicated. I can see the wrath of justice expiated by yonder bleeding sufferer on the accursed tree. I can see his mercy and his justice joining hands with his wrath. I can see his power now turned on my behalf, and no longer against me. I can see his faithfulness become the guardian of my soul instead of the slaughterer of my hopes. I can see all his attributes standing, each of them conjoined, each of them glorious, each of them lovely, and all united in the work of man's salvation. He that feareth God, knows half of God; he that believeth God, knoweth all of God that he can know; and the more he believeth God, the more he understandeth God, the more he comprehendeth his glory, his character, his nature, and his attributes.

2. The next thing is, that *the believer when he is brought into peace with God does not tremble at the thought of God's power.* He does not ask, "Will he plead against me with his great power?" But he says, "No, that very power, once my terror, and fear, is now my refuge and my hope, for he shall put that very power in me. I rejoice that God is Almighty, for he will lend me his omnipotence—he will put strength into me." Now, here is a great thought; if I had power to handle it, it would give me opportunity indeed to preach to you. But I cannot reach the heights of eloquence, I shall therefore simply exhibit the thought for a moment to you. The very power which would have damned my soul, saves my soul. The very power that would have crushed me, God puts into me, that the work of salvation may be accomplished. No, he will not use it to crush me, but he will put that very strength into me. Dost see there the Mighty One upon his throne? Dread Sovereign, I see thine awful arm. What, wilt thou crush the sinner? Wilt thou utterly destroy him with thy strength? "No," saith he, "Come hither, child." And if you go to his Almighty throne, "There," saith he "that self-same arm which made thee quake, see there, I give it to thee. Go out and live. I have made thee mighty as I am, to do my works; I will put strength into thee. The same strength which would have broken thee to pieces on the wheel shall now be put into thee, that thou mayest do mighty works."

Now, I will show you how this great strength displays itself. Sometimes it goes out in prayer. Did you ever hear a man pray in whom God had put strength? You have heard some

of us poor puny souls pray, I dare say; but have you ever heard a man pray that God had made into a giant? Oh, if you have, you will say it is a mighty thing to hear such a man in supplication. I have seen him now and then slip in his wrestling; but, like a giant, he has recovered his footing, and seemed like Jacob, to hurl the angel to the ground. I have marked the many lay hold upon the throne of mercy, and declare, "Lord, I will never let go, except thou bless me." I have seen him, when heaven's gates have been apparently barred, go up to them, and say, "Ye gates, open wide in Jesus' name;" and I have seen the gates fly open before him, as if the man were God himself; for he is armed with God Almighty's strength. I have seen that man, in prayer, discover some great mountain in his hills and made them like chaff, by the immensity of his might. Some of you think I am talking enthusiasm; but such cases have been, and are now. Oh! to have heard Luther pray! Luther, you know, when Melancthon was dying, went to his death-bed, and said, "Melancthon, you shall not die!" "Oh," said Melancthon, "I must die! It is a world of toil and trouble," "Melancthon," said he, "I have need of thee, and God's cause has need of thee, and as my name is Luther, thou shalt not die!" The physician said he would. Well, down went Luther on his knees, and began to tug at death. Old death struggled mightily for Melancthon, and he had got him well nigh on his shoulders. "Drop him," said Luther, "drop him, I want him." "No," said death, "he is my prey, I *will* take him!" "Down with him," said Luther, "down with him, death, or I will wrestle with thee!" And he seemed to take hold of the grim monster, and hurl him to the ground; and he came off victorious, like an Orpheus, with his wife, up from the very shades of death; he had delivered Melancthon from death by prayer! "Oh," say you, "that is an extraordinary case." No, beloved, not one-half so extraordinary as you dream. I have men and women here who have done the same in other cases; that have asked a thing of God, and have had it; that have been to the throne, and showed a promise, and said they would not come away without its fulfilment, and have come back fro God's throne conquerors of the Almighty; for prayer moves the arm that moves the world. "Prayer is the sinew of God," said one, "it moves his arm;" and so it is. Verily, in prayer, with the strength of the faithful heart, there is a beautiful fulfilment of the text, "He will put strength in me."

A second illustration. Not only in prayer, but in *duty*, the man who has great faith in God, and whom God has girded with strength, how gigantic does he become! Have you never read of those great heroes who put to flight whole armies, and scattered kings like the snow on Salmon? Have you never read of those men that were fearless of foes, and stalked onward before all their opposers, as if they would as soon die as live? I read, this day, of a case in the old kirk of Scotland, before that King James who wished to force the black prelacy upon them. Andrew Melville and some of his associates were deputed to wait upon the king, and as they were going with a scroll ready written, they were warned to take care and return, for their lives were at stake. They paused a moment, and Andrew said, "I am not afraid, thank God, nor feeble-spirited in the cause and message of Christ; come what pleases God

to send, our commission shall be executed.” At these words the deputation took courage, and went forward. On reaching the palace, and having obtained an audience, they found his majesty attended by Lennox and Arran, and several other lords, all of whom were English. They presented their remonstrance. Arran lifted it from the table, and glancing over it, he then turned to the ministers, and furiously demanded, “Who dares sign these treasonable articles?” “WE DARE.” said Andrew Melville, “and will render our lives in the cause.” Having thus spoken, he came forward to the table, took the pen, subscribed his name, and was followed by his brethren. Arran and Lennox were confounded; the king looked on in silence, and the nobles in surprise. Thus did our good forefathers appear before kings, and yet were not ashamed. “The proud had them greatly in derision, yet they declined not from the law of God.” Having thus discharged their duty, after a brief conference, the ministers were permitted to depart in peace. The king trembled more at them than if a whole army had been at his gates; and why was this? It was because God had put his own strength into them, to make them masters of their duty. And you have some such in your midst now. Despised they may be; but God has made them like the lion-like men of David, who would go down into the pit in the depth of winter, and take the lion by the throat and slay him. We have some in our churches—but a remnant, I admit—who are not afraid to serve their God, like Abdiel, “faithful amongst the faithless found.” We have some who are superior to the customs of the age, and scorn to bow at mammon’s knee, who will not use the trimming language of too many modern ministers, but stand out for God’s gospel, and the pure white banner of Christ, unstained and unsullied by the doctrines of men. Then are they mighty! Why they are mighty is, because God has put strength in them.

Still, some say, I have dealt with extraordinary cases. Come then, now we will have a home-case, one of your own sort, that will be like yourselves. Did you ever stand and take a view of heaven? Have you discerned the hills which lie between your soul and paradise? Have you counted the lions you have to fight, the giants to be slain, and the rivers to be crossed? Did you ever notice the many temptations with which you must be beset, the trials you have to endure, the difficulties you have to overcome, the dangers you have to avoid? Did you ever take a bird’s-eye view of heaven, and all the dangers which are strewn thickly along the path thither? And didst thou ever ask thyself this question, “How shall I, a poor feeble worm, ever get there?” Didst thou ever say within thyself, “I am not a match for all my foes, how shall I arrive at paradise?” If thou hast ever asked this question, I will tell thee what is the only answer for it: thou must be girded with Almighty strength, or else thou wilt never gain the victory. Easy thy path may be, but it is too hard for thy infantile strength, without the Almighty power. Thy path may be one of little temptation, and of shallow trial; but thou wilt be drowned in the floods yet, unless Almighty power preserve thee. Mark me! however smooth thy way, there is nothing short of the bare arm of Deity that can land any

one of you in heaven. We must have Divine strength, or else we shall never get there. And there is an illustration of these words: "No, but he will put his strength in me."

"And shall I hold on to the end?" says the believer. Yes, thou wilt, for God's strength is in thee. "Shall I be able to bear such-and-such a trial?" Yes, thou wilt. Cannot Omnipotence stem the torrent? And Omnipotence is in thee; for, like Ignatius of old, thou art a God-bearer; thou bearest God about with thee. Thy heart is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and thou shalt yet overcome. "But can I ever stand firm in such-and-such evil day?" Oh! yes you will, for he will put his strength in you. I was in company, some time ago, with some ministers; one of them observed, "Brother, if there were to be stakes in Smithfield again, I am afraid they would find very few to burn among us." "Well," I said, "I do not know anything about how you would burn; but this I know right well, that there never will be any lack of men who are ready to die for Christ." "Oh!" said he, "but they are not the right sort of men." "Well," said I, "but do you think they are the Lord's children?" "Yes, I believe they are, but they are not the right sort." "Ah!" said I, "but you would find them the right sort, if they came to the test every one of them; they have not got burning grace yet. What would be the use of it?" We do not want the grace till the stakes come; but we should have burning grace in burning moments. If now, to-night, a hundred of us were called to die for Christ, I believe there would not only be found a hundred, but five hundred, that would march to death, and sing all the way. Whenever I find faith, I believe that God will put strength into the man; and I never think anything to be impossible to a man with faith in God, while it is written, "He will put strength in me."

3. But now the last observation shall be, we shall all want this at the last; and it is a mercy for us that this is written, for never shall we require it, perhaps, more than then. *O believer, dost thou think thou wilt be able to swim the Jordan with thine own sinews?* Caesar could not swim the Tiber, accoutered as he was; and dost thou hope to swim the Jordan with thy flesh about thee? No, thou wilt sink then, unless Jesus, as Aeneas did Anchises, from the flames of Rome, upon his shoulders, lift thee from Jordan, and carry thee across the stream, thou wilt never be able to walk across the river; thou wilt ne'er be able to face that tyrant and smile in his face, unless thou hast something more than mortal. Thou wilt need then to be belted about with the girdle of divinity, or else thy loins will be loosed, and thy strength will fail thee, when thou needst it most. Many a man has ventured to the Jordan in his own strength; but oh! how he has shrieked and howled, when the first wave has touched his feet! But never weakling went to death with God within him, but he found himself mightier than the grace. Go on, Christian, for this is thy promise. "He will put strength in me."

"Weak, though I am, yet through his might,
I all things can perform."

Go on; dread not God's power, but rejoice at this, he will put his strength in you; he will not use his power to crush you.

Just one word, and then farewell. There is within reach of my voice, I am thoroughly convinced, one who is seeking Christ, whose only fear is this: "Sir, I would, but I cannot pray; I would, but I cannot believe; I would, but I cannot love; I would, but I cannot repent." Oh! hear this, soul: "He will put his strength in thee." Go home; and down on thy knees; if thou canst not pray, groan; if thou canst not groan, weep; if thou canst not weep, feel; if thou canst not feel, feel because thou canst not feel; for that is as far as many get. But stop there, mark you, stop there, and he will give you his blessing; do not get up till you have got the blessing. Go there in all thy weakness; if you do not feel it, say, "Lord, I do not feel as I ought to feel; but oh that I could! Lord, I cannot repent, as I would repent—oh that thou wouldst help me!" "Oh! sir," you say, "but I could not go so far as that, for I don't think I have got a strong desire." Go and say, "Lord I would desire; help me to desire." And then sit down and think of your lost estate. Think of your ruin and the remedy, and muse on that; and mark thee, whilst thou art in the way, the Lord will meet with thee. Only believe this, that if thou triest Christ he will never let thee try in vain. Go and risk thy soul on Christ to-night, neck or nothing, sinner. Go now, break or make; go and say, "Lord, I know I must be damned if I have not Christ." Stay there, and say, "If I perish, I perish only here;" and I tell you, you will never perish. I am bondsman for God. This head to the block if your soul goes to hell, if you pray sincerely and trust Christ. This neck to the gallows, again I say, this neck to the rope and to the hangman's gallows, if Christ reject you after your have earnestly sought him. Only try that, I beseech thee, poor soul. "Oh," you say, "but I have not strength enough; I cannot do that." Well, poor soul, *crawl* to the mercy-seat, and there lie flat, just as you are. You know that misery often speaks when it utters not a word. The poor mendicant squats himself down in the street. He says nothing, There protrudes a ragged knee, and there is a wounded hand. He says nothing; but with his hands folded on his breast he looks at every passer-by; and though not a word is spoken, he winneth more than if he daily drawled out his tale, or sung it along the street. So do thou sit like Bartimeus by the way-side begging; and if thou hearest him pass by, then cry, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me." But if thou canst scarce say that, sit there, and exhibit thy poor wounds; tell the Lord thy desperate condition; strip thy loathsome sores, and let the Almighty see the venom. Turn out thy heart, and let the rank corruption be all inspected by the Almighty eye. "And he hath mercies rich and free." Who can tell, poor sinner, who can tell? He may look on thee.

"Jesus died upon the tree,
And why, poor sinner, not for thee?
His Sovereign grace is rich and free,
And why, poor sinner, not for thee?
"Our Jesus loved and saved me,
Say why, poor sinner, why not thee?"

Only do this; and if thou art a sinner, hear this: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." He will not "Plead against you with his great power; no, he will put his strength in you!" The Lord dismiss you with his blessing!

Going Home—A Christmas Sermon

A Sermon

(No. 109)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 21, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”—[Mark 5:19](#).

THE CASE of the man here referred to is a very extraordinary one: it occupies a place among the memorabilia of Christ’s life, perhaps as high as anything which is recorded by either of the evangelists. This poor wretch being possessed with a legion of evil spirits had been driven to something worse than madness. He fixed his home among the tombs, where he dwelt by night and day, and was the terror of all those who passed by. The authorities had attempted to curb him; he had been bound with fetters and chains, but in the paroxysms of his madness he had torn the chains in sunder, and broken the fetters in pieces. Attempts had been made to reclaim him; but no man could tame him. He was worse than the wild beasts, for they might be tamed; but his fierce nature would not yield. He was a misery to himself, for he would run upon the mountains by night and day, crying and howling fearfully, cutting himself with the sharp flints, and torturing his poor body in the most frightful manner. Jesus Christ passed by; he said to the devils, “Come out of him.” The man was healed in a moment; he fell down at Jesus’ feet; he became a rational being—an intelligent man, yea, what is more, a convert to the Saviour. Out of gratitude to his deliverer, he said, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; I will be thy constant companion and thy servant; permit me so to be.” “No,” said Christ, “I esteem your motive; it is one of gratitude to me; but if you would show your gratitude, ‘go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.’”

Now, this teaches us a very important fact, namely, this, that true religion does not break in sunder the bonds of family relationship. True religion seldom encroaches upon that sacred, I had almost said divine institution called *home*; it does not separate men from their families, and make them aliens to their flesh and blood. Superstition has done that; an awful superstition, which calls itself Christianity, has sundered men from their kind; but true religion has never done so. Why, if I might be allowed to do such a thing, I would seek out the hermit in his lonely cavern, and I would go to him and say, “Friend, if thou art what thou dost profess to be, a true servant of the living God, and not a hypocrite, as I guess thou art—if thou art a true believer in Christ, and would show forth what he has done for thee, upset that pitcher, eat the last piece of thy bread, leave this dreary cave, wash thy face, untie thy hempen girdle; and if thou wouldst show thy gratitude, go home to thy friends, and tell

them what great things the Lord hath done for thee. Canst thou edify the sere leaves of the forest? Can the beasts learn to adore that God whom thy gratitude should strive to honor? Dost thou hope to convert these rocks, and wake the echoes into songs? Nay, go back; dwell with thy friends, reclaim thy kinship with men, and unite again with thy fellows, for this is Christ's approved way of showing gratitude." And I would go to every monastery and every nunnery, and say to the monks, 'Come out brethren, come out! If you are what you say you are, servants of God, go home to your friends. No more of this absurd discipline; it is not Christ's rule; you are acting differently from what he would have you; go home to your friends!' And to the sisters of mercy we would say, "Be sisters of mercy to your own sisters; go home to your friends; take care of your aged parents; turn your own houses into convents; do not sit here nursing your pride by a disobedience to Christ's rule, which says, "go home to thy friends." "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." The love of a solitary and ascetic life, which is by some considered to be a divine virtue, is neither more nor less than a disease of the mind. In the ages when there was but little benevolence, and consequently few hands to build lunatic asylums, superstition supplied the lack of charity, and silly men and women were allowed the indulgence of their fancies in secluded haunts or in easy laziness. Young has most truly said,—

"The first sure symptoms of a mind in health
Are rest of heart and pleasure found at home."

Avoid, my friends, above all things, those romantic and absurd conceptions of virtue which are the offspring of superstition and the enemies of righteousness. Be not without natural affection, but love those who are knit to you by time of nature.

True religion cannot be inconsistent with nature. It never can demand that I should abstain from weeping when my friend is dead. "Jesus wept." It cannot deny me the privilege of a smile, when providence looks favorably upon me; for once "Jesus rejoiced in the spirit, and said, Father, I thank thee." It does not make a man say to his father and mother, "I am no longer your son." That is not Christianity, but something worse than what beasts would do, which would lead us to be entirely sundered from our fellows, to walk among them as if we had no kinship with them. To all who think a solitary life must be a life of piety, I would say, "It is the greatest delusion." To all who think that those must be good people who snap the ties of relationship, let us say, "Those are the best who maintain them." Christianity makes a husband a better husband, it makes a wife a better wife than she was before. It does not free me from my duties as a son; it makes me a better son, and my parents better parents. Instead of weakening my love, it gives me fresh reason for my affection; and he whom I loved before as my father, I now love as my brother and co-worker in Christ Jesus; and she whom I revered as my mother, I now love as my sister in the covenant of grace, to be mine for ever in the state that is to come. Oh! suppose not, any of you, that Christianity was

ever meant to interfere with households; it is intended to cement them, and to make them households which death itself shall never sever, for it binds them up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God, and re-unites the several individuals on the other side of the flood.

Now, I will just tell you the reason why I selected my text. I thought within myself, there are a large number of young men who always come to hear me preach; they always crowd the aisles of my chapel, and many of them have been converted to God. Now, here is Christmas-day come round again, and they are going home to see their friends. When they get home they will want a Christmas Carol in the evening; I think I will suggest one to them—more especially to such of them as have been lately converted. I will give them a theme for their discourse on Christmas evening; it may not be quite so amusing as “The Wreck of the Golden Mary,” but it will be quite as interesting to Christian people. It shall be this: “Go home and tell your friends what the Lord hath done for your souls, and how he hath had compassion on you.” For my part, I wish there were twenty Christmas days in the year. It is seldom that young men can meet with their friends; it is rarely they can all be united as happy families; and though I have no respect to the religious observance of the day, yet I love it as a family institution, as one of England’s brightest days, the great Sabbath of the year, when the plough rests in its furrow, when the din of business is hushed, when the mechanic and the working man go out to refresh themselves upon the green award of the glad earth. If any of you are masters you will pardon me for the digression, when I most respectfully beg you to pay your servants the same wages on Christmas-day as if they were at work. I am sure it will make their houses glad if you will do so. It is unfair for you to make them feast or fast, unless you give them wherewithal to feast and make themselves glad on that day of joy.

But now to come to the subject. We are going home to see our friends, and here is the story some of us have to tell. “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for them, and hath had compassion on thee.” First, *here is what they are to tell*; secondly, *why they are to tell it*; and then thirdly, *how they ought to tell it*.

I. First, then, HERE IS WHAT THEY ARE TO TELL. It is to be a story of *personal experience*. “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” You are not to repair to your houses and forthwith begin to preach. That you are not commanded to do. You are not to begin to take up doctrinal subjects and expatiate on them, and endeavour to bring persons to your peculiar views and sentiments. You are not to go home with sundry doctrines you have lately learned, and try to teach these. At least you are not commanded so to do; you may, if you please, and none shall hinder you; but you are to go home and tell not what you have believed, but what you have *felt*—what you really know to be your own; not what great things you have read, but what great things the Lord hath *done for you*; not alone what you have seen done in the great congregation, and how great sinners have turned to God, but what the Lord has done

for *you*. And mark this: there is never a more interesting story than that which a man tells about himself. The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner derives much of its interest because the man who told it was himself the mariner. He sat down, that man whose finger was skinny, like the finger of death, and began to tell that dismal story of the ship at sea in the great calm, when slimy things did crawl with legs over the shiny sea. The Wedding guest sat still to listen, for the old man was himself a story. There is always a great deal of interest excited by a personal narrative. Virgil, the poet, knew this, and therefore he wisely makes Aeneas tell his own story, and makes him begin it by saying, "In which I also had a great part myself." So if you would interest your friends, tell them what you felt yourself. Tell them how you were once a lost abandoned sinner, how the Lord met with you, how you bowed your knees, and poured out your soul before God, and how at last you leaped with joy, for you thought you heard him say within you, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake." Tell your friends a story of your own personal experience.

Note, next, it must be a story of *free grace*. It is not, "Tell thy friends how great things thou hast done thyself," but "how great things *the Lord* hath done for thee." The man who always dwells upon free will and the power of the creature, and denies the doctrines of grace, invariably mixes up a great deal of what he has done himself in telling his experience; but the believer in free grace, who holds the great cardinal truths of the gospel, ignores this, and declares, "I will tell what the Lord hath done for me. It is true I must tell how I was first made to pray; but I will tell it thus—

'Grace taught my soul to pray,
Grace made my eyes o'erflow.'

It is true, I must tell in how many troubles and trials God has been with me; but I will tell it thus:—

"Twas grace which kept me to this day,
And will not let me go."

He says nothing about his own doings, or willings, or prayings, or seekings, but he ascribes it all to the love and grace of the great God who looks on sinners in love, and makes them his children, heirs of everlasting life. Go home, you man, and tell the poor sinner's story; go home, young woman, and open your diary, and give your friends stories of grace. Tell them of the mighty works of God's hand which he hath wrought in you from his own free, sovereign, undeserved love. Make it a free grace story around your family fire.

In the next place, this poor man's tale was a *grateful* story. I know it was grateful, because the man said, "I will tell thee how great things the Lord hath done for me;" and (not meaning a pun in the least degree) I may observe, that a man who is grateful is always full of the greatness of the mercy which God has shown him; he always thinks that what God has done for him is immensely good and supremely great. Perhaps when you are telling the story one of your friends will say, "And what of that?" And your answer will be, "It may not be a great

thing to you, but it is to me. You say it is little to repent, but I have not found it so; it is a great and precious thing to be brought to know myself to be a sinner, and to confess it; do you say it is a little thing to have found a Saviour.” Look them in the face and say, “If you had found him too you would not think it little. You think it little I have lost the burden from my back; but if you had suffered with it, and felt its weight as I have for many a long year, you would think it no little thing to be emancipated and free, through a sight of the cross.” Tell them it is a great story, and if they cannot see its greatness shed great tears, and tell it to them with great earnestness, and I hope they may be brought to believe that you at least are grateful, if they are not. May God grant that you may tell a grateful story. No story is more worth hearing than a tale of gratitude.

And lastly, upon this point: it must be a tale told by a poor sinner who feels himself *not to have deserved* what he has received. “How he hath had *compassion* on thee.” It was not a mere act of kindness, but an act of free compassion towards one who was in misery. Oh! I have heard men tell the story of their conversion and of their spiritual life in such a way that my heart hath loathed *them* and their story too, for they have told of their sins as if they did boast in the greatness of their crime, and they have mentioned the love of God not with a tear of gratitude, not with the simple thanksgiving of the really humble heart, but as if they as much exalted themselves as they exalted God. Oh! when we tell the story of our own conversion, I would have it done with deep sorrow, remembering what we used to be, and with great joy and gratitude, remembering how little we deserve these things, I was once preaching upon conversion and salvation, and I felt within myself, as preachers often do, that it was but dry work to tell this story, and a dull, dull tale it was to me; but on a sudden the thought crossed my mind, “Why, you are a poor lost ruined sinner yourself; tell it, tell it, as you received it; begin to tell of the grace of God as you trust you feel it yourself.” Why, then, my eyes began to be fountains of tears; those hearers who had nodded their heads began to brighten up, and they listened, because they were hearing something which the man felt himself, and which they recognised as being true to him, if it was not true in them. Tell your story, my hearers, as lost sinners. Do not go to your home, and walk into your house with a supercilious air, as much as to say, “Here’s a saint come home to the poor sinners, to tell them a story;” but go home like a poor sinner yourself; and when you go in, your mother remembers what you used to be, you need not tell her there is a change—she will notice it, if it is only one day you are with her; and perhaps she will say, “John, what is this change that is in you?” and if she is a pious mother, you will begin to tell her the story, and I know, man though you are, you will not blush when I say it, she will put her arms round your neck, and kiss you as she never did before, for you are her twice-born son, hers from whom she shall never part, even though death itself shall divide you for a brief moment. “Go home, then, and tell your friends what great things the Lord hath done for you, and how he hath had compassion on you.”

II. But now, in the second place, WHY SHOULD WE TELL THIS STORY? For I hear many of my congregation say, “Sir, I could relate that story to any one sooner than I could to my own friends; I could come to your vestry, and tell you something of what I have tasted and handled of the Word of God; but I could not tell my father, nor my mother, nor my brethren, nor my sisters.” Come, then; I will try and argue with you, to induce you to do so, that I may send you home this Christmas-day, to be missionaries in the localities to which you belong, and to be real preachers, though you are not so by name. Dear friends, do tell this story when you go home.

First, for *your Master’s sake*. Oh! I know you love him; I am sure you do, if you have proof that he loved you. You can never think of Gethsemane and of its bloody sweat, of Gabbatha and of the mangled back of Christ, flayed by the whip: you can never think of Calvary and his pierced hands and feet, without loving him; and it is a strong argument when I say to you, for his dear sake who loved you so much, go home and tell it. What! do you think we can have so much done for us, and yet not tell it? Our children, if anything should be done for them, do not stay many minutes before they are telling all the company, “such an one hath give me such a present, and bestowed on me such-and-such a favor.” And should the children of God be backward in declaring how they were saved when their feet made haste to hell, and how redeeming mercy snatched them as brands from the burning? You love Jesus, young man! I put it to you, then, will you refuse to tell the tale of his love to you? Shall your lips be dumb, when his honor is concerned? Will you not, wherever you go, tell of the God who loved you and died for you? This poor man, we are told, “Departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him, and all men did marvel.” So with you. If Christ has done much for you, you cannot help it—you must tell it. My esteemed friend, Mr. Oncken, a minister in Germany told us last Monday evening, that so soon as he was converted himself, the first impulse of his new-born soul was to do good to others. And where should he do that good? Well, he thought he would go to Germany. It was his own native land, and he thought the command was, “Go home to thy friends and tell them.” Well, there was not a single Baptist in all Germany, nor any with whom he could sympathise, for the Lutherans had swerved from the faith of Luther, and gone aside from the truth of God. But he went there and preached, and he has now seventy or eighty churches established on the continent. What made him do it? Nothing but love for his Master, who had done so much for him, could have forced him to go and tell his kinsmen the marvellous tale of Divine goodness.

But, in the next place, are your friends pious? Then go home and tell them, in order *to make their hearts glad*. I received last night a short epistle written with a trembling hand by one who is past the natural age of man, living in the country of Essex. His son, under God, had been converted by hearing the Word preached, and the good man could not help writing to the minister, thanking *him*, and blessing most of all, his God, that his son had been regen-

erated. “Sir,” he begins, “an old rebel writes to thank you, and above all to thank his God, that his dear son has been converted.” I shall treasure up that epistle. It goes on to say, “Go on! and the Lord bless you.” And there was another case I heard some time ago, where a young woman went home to her parents, and when her mother saw her, she said, “There! if the minister had made me a present of all London, I should not have thought so much of it as I do of this—to think that you have really become a changed character, and are living in the fear of God.” Oh! if you want to make your mother’s heart leap within her, and to make your father glad—if you would make that sister happy who sent you so many letters, which sometimes you read against a lamp-post, with your pipe in your mouth—go home and tell your mother that her wishes are all accomplished, that her prayers are heard, that you will no longer chaff her about her Sunday-school class, and no longer laugh at her because she loves the Lord, but that you will go with her to the house of God, for you love God, and you have said, “Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God, for I have a hope that your heaven shall be my heaven for ever.” Oh! what a happy thing it would be if some here who had gone astray, should thus go home! It was my privilege a little while ago to preach for a noble institution for the reception of women who had led abandoned lives—and before I preached the sermon I prayed to God to bless it, and in the printed sermon you will notice that at the end of it there is an account of two persons who were blessed by that sermon and restored. Now, let me tell you a story of what happened to Mr. Vanderkist, a city missionary, who toils all night long to do good in that great work. There had been a drunken broil in the street; he stepped between the men to part them, and said something to a woman who stood there concerning how dreadful a thing it was that men should thus be intemperate. She walked with him a little way, and he with her, and she began to tell him such a tale of woe and sin too—how she had been lured away from her parents’ home in Somersetshire, and have been brought up here to her soul’s eternal hurt. He took her home with him, and taught her the fear and love of Christ; and what was the first thing she did, when she returned to the paths of godliness, and found Christ to be the sinner’s Saviour? She said, “Now, I must go home to my friends.” Her friends were written to; they came to meet her at the station at Bristol, and you can hardly conceive what a happy meeting it was. The father and mother had lost their daughter, they had never heard from her; and there she was, brought back by the agency of this institution, and restored to the bosom of her family. Ah! if such an one be here! I know not; among such a multitude there may be such an one. Woman! hast thou strayed from thy family? Hast thou left them long? “Go home to thy friends,” I beseech thee, ere thy father totters to his grave, and ere thy mother’s grey hairs sleep on the snow-white pillow of her coffin. Go back. I beseech thee! Tell her thou art penitent; tell her that God hath met with thee—that the young minister said, “Go back to thy friends.” And if so, I shall not blush to have said these things, though you may think I ought not to have mentioned them; for if I may but win one such soul, I will bless God to

all eternity. “Go home to thy friends. Go home and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.” Cannot you imagine the scene, when the poor demoniac mentioned in my text went home? He had been a raving madman; and when he came and knocked at the door, don’t you think you see his friends calling to one another in affright, “Oh! there he is again,” and the mother running up stairs and locking all the doors, because her son had come back that was raving mad; and the little ones crying because they knew what he had been before—how he cut himself with stones, because he was possessed with devils. And can you picture their joy, when the man said, “Mother! Jesus Christ has healed me; let me in; I am no lunatic now!” And when the father opened the door, he said, “Father! I am not what I was; all the evil spirits are gone; I shall live in the tombs no longer. I want to tell you how the glorious man who wrought my deliverance accomplished the miracle—how he said to the devils, ‘Get ye hence,’ and they ran down a steep place into the sea, and I am come home healed and saved.” Oh! if such an one, possessed with sin, were here this morning, and would go home to his friends, to tell them of his release, methinks this scene would be somewhat similar.

Once more, dear friends. I hear one of you say. “Ah! Sir, would to God I could go home to pious friends! But when I go home I go into the worst of places; for my home is amongst those who never knew God themselves, and consequently never prayed for me, and never taught me anything concerning heaven.” Well, young man, go home to your friends. If they are ever so bad they are your friends. I sometimes meet with young men wishing to join the church, who say, when I ask them about their father, “Oh, sir, I am parted from my father.” Then I say, “Young man, you may just go and see your father before I have anything to do with you; if you are at ill-will with your father and mother I will not receive you into the church; if they are ever so bad they are *your parents*.” Go home to them, and tell them, not to make them glad, for they will very likely be angry with you; but tell them *for their soul’s salvation*. I hope, when you are telling the story of what God did for you, that they will be led by the Spirit to desire the same mercy themselves. But I will give you a piece of advice. Do not tell this story to your ungodly friends when they are all together, for they will laugh at you. Take them one by one, when you can get them alone, and begin to tell it to them, and they will hear you seriously. There was once a very pious lady who kept a lodging-house for young men. All the young men were very gay and giddy, and she wanted to say something to them concerning religion. She introduced the subject, and it was passed off immediately with a laugh. She thought within herself, “I have made a mistake.” The next morning, after breakfast, when they were all going, she said to one of them, “Sir, I should like to speak with you a moment or two,” and taking him aside into another room she talked with him. The next morning she took another, and the next morning another, and it pleased God to bless her simple statement, when it was given individually: but, without doubt, if she had spoken to them altogether, they would have backed each other up in laughing her to scorn. Reprove

a man alone. A verse may hit him whom a sermon flies. You may be the means of bringing a man to Christ who has often heard the Word and only laughed at it, but who cannot resist a gentle admonition. In one of the states of America, there was an infidel who was a great despiser of God, a hater of the Sabbath and all religious institutions. What to do with him the ministers did not know. They met together and prayed for him. But among the rest, one Elder B_____ resolved to spend a long time in prayer for the man; after that he got on horseback, and rode down to the man's forge, for he was a blacksmith. He left his horse outside, and said, "Neighbour, I am under very great concern about your soul's salvation; I tell you I pray day and night for your soul's salvation." He left him, and rode home on his horse. The man went inside to his house after a minute or two, and said to one of his faithful friends, "Here's a new argument; here's Elder B_____ been down here, he did not dispute, and never said a word to me except this, 'I say, I am under great concern about your soul; I cannot bear that you should be lost.' Oh! that fellow," he said, "I cannot answer him;" and the tears began to roll down his cheeks. He went to his wife, and said, "I can't make this out; I never cared about my soul, but here's an elder, that has no connection with me, but I have always laughed at him, and he has come five miles this morning on horseback just to tell me he is under concern about my salvation. After a little while he thought it was time he should be under concern about his salvation too. He went in, shut the door, began to pray, and the next day he was at the deacon's house, telling him that he too was under concern about his salvation, and asking him to tell him what he must do to be saved. Oh! that the everlasting God might make use of some of those now present in the same way, that they might be induced to

"Tell to others round
What a dear Saviour they have found;
To point to his redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God!"

III. I shall not detain you much longer; but there is a third point, upon which we must be very brief. HOW IS THIS STORY TO BE TOLD?

First, *tell it truthfully*. Do not tell more than you know; do not tell John Bunyan's experience, when you ought to tell your own. Do not tell your mother you have felt what only Rutherford felt. Tell her no more than the truth. Tell your experience truthfully; for mayhap one single fly in the pot of ointment will spoil it, and one statement you may make which is not true may ruin it all. Tell the story truthfully.

In the next place, *tell it very humbly*. I have said that before. Do not intrude yourselves upon those who are older, and know more; but tell your story humbly; not as a preacher, not *ex-cathedra*, but as a friend and as a son.

Next, *tell it very earnestly*. Let them see you mean it. Do not talk about religion flippantly; you will do not good if you do. Do not make puns on texts; do not quote Scripture by way

of joke: if you do, you may talk till you are dumb, you will do no good, if you in the least degree give them occasion to laugh by laughing at holy things yourself. Tell it very earnestly.

And then, *tell it very devoutly*. Do not try to tell your tale to man till you have told it first to God. When you are at home on Christmas-day, let no one see your face till God has seen it. Be up in the morning, wrestle with God; and if your friends are not converted, *wrestle with God for them*; and then you will find it easy work to *wrestle with them for God*. Seek, if you can, to get them one by one, and tell them the story. Do not be afraid; only think of the good you may possibly do. Remember, he that saves a soul from death hath covereth a multitude of sins, and he shall have stars in his crown for ever and ever. Seek to be under God—Saviours in your family, to be the means of leading your own beloved brethren and sisters to seek and to find the Lord Jesus Christ, and then one day, when you shall meet in Paradise, it will be a joy and blessedness to think that you are there, and that your friends are there too, whom God will have made you the instrument of saving. Let your reliance in the Holy Spirit be entire and honest. Trust not yourself, but fear not to trust him. He can give you words. He can apply those words to their heart, and so enable you to “minister grace to the hearers.”

To close up, by a short, and I think, a pleasant turning of the text, to suggest another meaning to it. Soon, dear friends, very soon with some of us, the Master will say, “Go home to thy friends.” You know where the home is. It is up above the stars.

“Where our best friends, our kindred dwell,
Where God our Saviour reigns.”

Yon grey-headed man has buried all his friends; he has said, “I shall go to them, but they will not return to me.” Soon his Master will say, “Thou hast had enough tarrying here in this vale of tears: go home to thy friends!” Oh! happy hour! Oh! blessed moment, when that shall be the word—“Go home to thy friends!” And when we go home to our friends in Paradise, what shall we do? Why, first we will repair to that blest seat where Jesus sits, take off our crown and cast it at his feet, and crown him Lord of all. And when we have done that, what shall be our next employ? Why, we will tell the blessed ones in heaven what the Lord hath done for us, and how he hath had compassion on us. And shall such a tale be told in heaven? Shall that be the Christmas Carol of the angels? Yes, it shall be; it has been published there before—blush not to tell it yet again—for Jesus has told it before, “When he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.” And thou, poor sheep, when thou shall be gathered in, wilt thou not tell how thy Shepherd sought thee, and how he found thee? Will thou not sit in the grassy meads of heaven, and tell the story of thine own redemption? Wilt thou not talk with thy brethren and thy sisters, and tell them how God loved thee and hath brought thee there? Perhaps thou sayest, “It will be a very short story.” Ah! it would be if you could write now. A little book might be the whole of your biography; but up there

when your memory shall be enlarged, when your passion shall be purified and your understanding clear, you will find that what was but a tract on earth will be a huge tome in heaven. You will tell a long story there of God's sustaining, restraining, constraining grace, and I think that when you pause to let another tell his tale, and then another, and then another, you will at last, when you have been in heaven a thousand years, break out and exclaim, "O saints, I have something else to say." Again they will tell their tales, and again you will interrupt them with "Oh, beloved, I have thought of another case of God's delivering mercy." And so you will go on, giving them themes for songs, finding them the material for the warp and woof of heavenly sonnets. "Go home," he will soon say, "go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Wait awhile; tarry his leisure, and ye shall soon be gathered to the land of the hereafter, to the home of the blessed, where endless felicity shall be thy portion. God grant a blessing for his name's sake!

The London Female Dormitory.

Heavenly Worship

A Sermon

(No. 110)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 28th, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”—[Revelation 14:1-3](#).

THE SCENE of this marvellous and magnificent vision is laid upon Mount Sion; by which we are to understand, not Mount Sion upon earth, but Mount Sion which is above, “Jerusalem, the mother of us all.” To the Hebrew mind Mount Sion was a type of heaven, and very justly so. Among all the mountains of the earth none was to be found so famous as Sion. It was there that patriarch Abraham drew his knife to slay his son; it was there, too, in commemoration of that great triumph of faith, Solomon built a majestic temple, “beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth.” That Mount Sion was the centre of all the devotions of the Jews.

“Up to her courts, with joys unknown,

The sacred tribes repaired.”

Between the wings of the cherubim Jehovah dwelt; on the one altar there all the sacrifices were offered to high heaven. They loved Mount Sion, and often did they sing, when they drew nigh to her, in their annual pilgrimages, “How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord God of hosts, my King and my God!” Sion is now desolate; she hath been ravished by the enemy; she hath been utterly destroyed; her vail hath been rent asunder, and the virgin daughter of Sion is now sitting in sackcloth and ashes; but, nevertheless, to the Jewish mind it must ever, in its ancient state, remain the best and sweetest type of heaven. John, therefore, when he saw this sight might have said, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood in heaven, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand having his Father’s name written in their foreheads: And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”

This morning I shall endeavour to show you, first of all, *the object of heavenly worship*—the Lamb in the midst of the throne; in the next place we shall look at *the worshippers themselves*, and note their manner and their character; in the third place we shall listen to *hear their song*, for we may almost hear it; it is like “the noise of many waters and like great thunder;” and then we shall close by noting, that it is *a new song* which they sing, and by endeavouring to mention one or two reasons why it must necessarily be so.

I. In the first place, then, we wish to take a view of THE OBJECT OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP. The divine John was privileged to look within the gates of pearl; and on turning round to tell us what he saw—observe how he begins—he saith not, “I saw streets of gold or walls of Jasper;” he saith not, “I saw crowns, marked their lustre, and saw the wearers.” That he shall notice afterwards. But he begins by saying, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!” To teach us that the very first and chief object of attraction in the heavenly state is “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” Nothing else attracted the Apostle’s attention so much as the person of that Divine Being, who is the Lord God, our most blessed Redeemer: “I looked, and, lo a Lamb!” Beloved, if we were allowed to look within the vail which parts us from the world of spirits, we should see, first of all, the person of our Lord Jesus. If now we could go where the immortal spirits “day without night circle the throne rejoicing,” we should see each of them with their faces turned in one direction; and if we should step up to one of the blessed spirits, and say, “O bright immortal, why are thine eyes fixed? What is it that absorbs thee quite, and wraps thee up in vision?” He, without deigning to give an answer, would simply point to the centre of the sacred circle, and lo, we should see a Lamb in the midst of the throne. They have not yet ceased to admire his beauty, and marvel at his wonders and adore his person.

“Amidst a thousand harps and songs,
Jesus, our God, exalted reigns.”

He is the theme of song and the subject of observation of all the glorified spirits and of all the angels in paradise. “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!”

Christian, here is joy for thee; thou hast looked, and thou hast seen the Lamb. Through thy tearful eyes thou hast seen the Lamb taking away thy sins. Rejoice, then! In a little while, when thine eyes shall have been wiped from tears, thou wilt see the same Lamb exalted on his throne. It is the joy of the heart to hold daily fellowship and communion with Jesus; thou shalt have the same joy in heaven; “there shalt thou see him as he is, and thou shalt be like him.” Thou shalt enjoy the constant vision of his presence, and thou shalt dwell with him for aye. “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!” Why, that Lamb is heaven itself; for as good Rutherford says, “Heaven and Christ are the same things; to be with Christ is to be in heaven, and to be in heaven is to be with Christ.” And he very sweetly says in one of his letters, wrapped up in love to Christ. “Oh! my Lord Christ, if I could be in heaven without thee, it would be a hell; and if I could be in hell, and have thee still, it would be a heaven to

me, for thou art all the heaven I want.” It is true, is it not Christian? Does not thy soul say so?

“Not all the harps above
Could make a heavenly place,
Should Christ his residence remove,
Or but conceal his face.”

All thou needest to make thee blessed, supremely blessed, is “to be with Christ, which is far better.”

And now observe *the figure under which Christ is represented in heaven*. “I looked, and lo, a Lamb.” Now, you know Jesus, in Scripture, is often represented as a lion: he is so to his enemies, for he devoureth them, and teareth them to pieces. “Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear *you* in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” But in heaven he is in the midst of his friends, and therefore he

Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still.”

Why should Christ in heaven choose to appear under the figure of a lamb, and not in some other of his glorious characters? We reply, because it was as a lamb that Jesus fought and conquered, and, therefore as a lamb he appears in heaven. I have read of certain military commanders, when they were conquerors, that on the anniversary of their victory they would never wear anything but the garment in which they fought. On that memorable day they say, “Nay, take away the robes; I will wear the garment which has been embroidered with the sabre-cut, and garnished with the shot that hath riddled it; I will wear no other garb but that in which I fought and conquered.” It seems as if the same feeling possessed the breast of Christ. “As a Lamb,” saith he, “I died, and worsted hell; as a Lamb I have redeemed my people, and therefore as a Lamb I will appear in paradise.”

But, perhaps, there is another reason; it is to encourage us to come to him in prayer. Ah, believer, we need not be afraid to come to Christ, for he is a Lamb. To a lion-Christ we need fear to come; but the Lamb-Christ!—oh, little children, were ye ever afraid of lambs? Oh, children of the living God, should ye ever fail to tell your griefs and sorrows into the breast of one who is a Lamb? Ah, let us come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace, seeing a Lamb sits upon it. One of the things which tend very much to spoil prayer-meetings is the fact that our brethren do not pray boldly. They would practice reverence, as truly they ought, but they should remember that the highest reverence is consistent with true familiarity. No man more reverent than Luther; no man more fully carried out for the passage, “He talked with his Maker as a man talketh with his friend.” We may be as reverent as the angels, and yet we may be as familiar as children in Christ Jesus. Now, our friends, when they pray, very frequently say the same thing every time. They are Dissenters; they cannot bear the Prayer Book; they think that forms of prayer are bad, but they always use their own form

of prayer notwithstanding; as much as if they were to say that the bishop's form would not do, but their own they must always use. But a form of prayer being wrong, is as much wrong when I make it as when the bishop makes it; I am as much out of order in using what I compose myself continually and constantly, as I am when I am using one that has been composed for me; perhaps far more so, as it is not likely to be one-half so good. If our friends, however, would lay aside the form into which they grow, and break up the stereotyped plates with which they print their prayers so often, they might come boldly to the throne of God, and need never fear to do so; for he whom they address is represented in heaven under the figure of a Lamb, to teach us to come close to him, and tell him all our wants, believing that he will not disdain to hear them.

And you will further notice that *this Lamb is said to stand*. Standing is the posture of triumph. The Father said to Christ, "Sit thou on my throne, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." It is done; they are his footstool, and here he is said to stand erect, like a victor over all his enemies. Many a time the Saviour knelt in prayer; once he hung upon the cross; but when the great scene of our text shall be fully wrought out, he shall stand erect, as more than conqueror, through his own majestic might. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion." Oh, if we could rend the veil—if now we were privileged to see within it—there is no sight would so enthrall us as the simple sight of the Lamb in the midst of the throne. My dear brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, would it not be all the sight you would ever wish to see, if you could once behold him whom your soul loveth? Would it not be a heaven to you, if it were carried out in your experience—"Mine eye shall see him, and not another's?" Would you want anything else to make you happy but continually to see him? Can you not say with the poet—

"Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall o'er my Saviour's beauty rove,
And endless ages I'll adore
The wonders of his love?"

And if a single glimpse of him on earth affords you profound delight; it must be, indeed, a very sea of bliss, and an abyss of paradise, without a bottom or a shore, to see him as he is; to be lost in his splendours, as the stars are lost in the sunlight, and to hold fellowship with him, as did John the beloved, when he leaned his head upon his bosom. And this shall be thy lot, to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

II. The second point is, THE WORSHIPPERS, WHO ARE THEY? Turn to the text, and you will not, first of all, *their numbers*—"I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand." This is a certain number put for an uncertain—I mean uncertain to us, though not uncertain to God. It is a vast number, put for that "multitude which no man can number," who shall stand before the throne of God. Now, here is something not very pleasant to my friend Bigot yonder. Note the number of

those who are to be saved; they are said to be a great number, even a “hundred forty and four thousand,” which is but a unit put for the vast innumerable multitude who are to be gathered home. Why, my friend, there are so many as that belonging to your church. You believe that none will be saved but those who hear your minister, and believe your creed; I do not think you could find one hundred and forty-four thousand anywhere. You will have to enlarge your heart I think; you must take in a few more, and not be so inclined to shut out the Lord’s people, because you cannot agree with them. I do abhor from my heart that continual whining of some men about their own little church as the “remnant”—the “few that are to be saved.” They are always dwelling upon strait gates and narrow ways, and upon what they conceive to be a truth, that but few shall enter heaven. Why, my friends, I believe there will be more in heaven than in hell. If you ask me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to “have the pre-eminence,” and I cannot conceive how he could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in paradise. Moreover, it is said there is to be a multitude that no man can number in heaven; I have never read that there is to be a multitude that no man can number in hell. But I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them! And then there are the just, and the redeemed of all nations and kindreds up till now; and there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal; when he shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway; when kingdoms shall bow before him, and nations be born in a day; and in the thousand years of the great millennial state there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before. Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last; his train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariots of the grim monarch of hell. Christ shall be master everywhere, and his praise sounded in every land. One hundred and forty-four thousand were observed, the types and representatives of a far larger number who are ultimately to be saved.

But notice, whilst the number is very large, *how very certain it is*. By turning over the leaves of your Bible to a previous chapter of this book, you will see that at the 4th verse it is written, that one hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed; and now we find there are one hundred and forty-four thousand saved; not 143,999, and 144,001, but exactly the number that are sealed. Now, my friends may not like what I am going to say; but if they do not like it, their quarrel is with God’s Bible, not with me. There will be just as many in heaven as are sealed by God—just as many as Christ did purchase with his blood; all of them, and no more and no less. There will be just as many there as were quickened to life by the Holy Spirit, and were, “born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “Ah,” some say, “there is that abominable doctrine of election.” Exactly so, if it be abominable; but you will never be able to cut it out of the Bible. You may hate it, and gnash and grind your teeth against it; but, remember, we can trace the pedigree of this

doctrine, even apart from Scripture, to the time of the apostles. Church of England ministers and members, you have no right to differ from me on the doctrine of election, if you are what you profess by your own Articles. You who love the old Puritans, you have no right to quarrel with me; for where will you find a Puritan who was not a strong Calvinist? You who love the fathers, you cannot differ from me. What say you of Augustine? Was he not, in his day, called a great and mighty teacher of grace? And I even turn to Roman Catholics, and, with all the errors of their system, I remind them that even in their body have been found those who have held that doctrine, and, though long persecuted for it, have never been expelled the church. I refer to the Jansenists. But, above all, I challenge every man who reads his Bible to say that that doctrine is not there. What saith the 9th of Romans? “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” And then it goes on to say to the carping objector—“Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor?” But enough on this subject.

One hundred and forty-four thousand, we say, is a certain number made to represent the certainty of the salvation of all God’s elect, believing people. Now, some say that this doctrine has a tendency to discourage men from coming to Christ. Well, you say so; but I have never seen it, and blessed be God I have never proved it so. I have preached this doctrine ever since I began to preach; but I can say this,—ye shall not (and I am now become a fool in glorying) ye shall not find among those who have not preached the doctrine, one who has been the instrument of turning more harlots, more drunkards, and more sinners of every class, from the error of their ways, than I have, by the simple preaching of the doctrine of free grace; and, while this has been so, I hold that no argument can be brought to prove that it has a tendency to discourage sinners, or bolster them up in sin. We hold, as the Bible says, that all the elect, and those only, shall be saved; all who go to Christ are elect. So that if any of you have in your heart a desire after heaven and after Christ; if you carry out that desire in sincere and earnest prayer, and are born again, you may as certainly conclude your election as you can conclude that you are alive. You must have been chosen of God before the foundation of the world, or you would never have done any of these things, seeing they are the fruits of election.

But why should it keep any one from going to Christ? “Because,” says one, “if I go to Christ I may not be elect.” No, sir, if you go, you prove that you are elect. “But,” says another, “I am afraid to go, in case I should not be elect.” Say as an old woman once said, “If there were only three persons elected, I would try to be one of them; and since he said, ‘He that believeth shall be saved,’ I would challenge God on his promise, and try if he would break

it.” No, come to Christ; and if you do so, beyond a doubt you are God’s elect from the foundation of the world; and therefore this grace has been given to you. But why should it discourage you? Suppose there are a number of sick folk here, and a large hospital has been built. There is put up over the door, “All persons who come shall be taken in:” at the same time it is known that there is a person inside the hospital, who is so wise that he knows all who will come, and has written down the names of all who will come in a book, so that, when they come, those who open the doors will only say, “How marvellously wise our Master was, to know the names of those who would come.” Is there anything despiriting in that? You would go, and you would have all the more confidence in that man’s wisdom, because he was able to know before that they were going. “Ah, but,” you say, “it was ordained that some should come.” Well, to give you another illustration; suppose there is a rule that there always must be a thousand persons, or a very large number in the hospital. You say, “When I go perhaps they will take me in, and perhaps they will not.” “But,” says someone, “there is a rule that there must be a thousand in: somehow or other they must make up that number of beds, and have that number of patients in the hospital.” You say, “Then why should not I be among the thousand; and have not I the encouragement that whosoever goes shall not be cast out? And have I not again the encouragement, that if they will not go, they must be fetched in somehow or other; for the number must be made up; so it is determined and so it is decreed.” You would therefore have a double encouragement, instead of half a one; and you would go with confidence, and say, “They must take me in, because they say they will take all in that come; and on the other hand, they must take me in, because they must have a certain number: that number is not made up, and why should not I be one?” Oh, never doubt about election; believe in Christ, and then rejoice in election; do not fret about it till you have believed in Christ.

“I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand.” And who were these people, “having his Father’s name written in their foreheads?” Not *Bs* for “Baptists,” not *Ws* for “Wesleyans,” not *Es* for “Established Church:” they had their Father’s name and nobody else’s. What a deal of fuss is made on earth about our distinctions! We think such a deal about belonging to this denomination, and the other. Why, if you were to go to heaven’s gates, and ask if they had any Baptists there, the angel would only look at you, and not answer you; if you were to ask if they had any Wesleyans, or members of the Established Church, he would say, “Nothing of the sort;” but if you were to ask him whether they had any Christians there, “Ay,” he would say, “an abundance of them: they are all one now—all called by one name; the old brand has been obliterated, and now they have not the name of this man or the other; they have the name of God, even their Father, stamped on their brow.” Learn then dear friends, whatever the connection to which you belong, to be charitable to your brethren, and kind to them, seeing that, after all, the

name you now hold here will be forgotten in heaven, and only your Father's name will be there known.

One more remark here, and we will turn from the worshippers to listen to their song. It is said of all these worshippers that they learned the song before they went there. At the end of the third verse it is said, "No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." Brethren, we must begin heaven's song here below, or else we shall never sing it above. The choristers of heaven have all had rehearsals upon earth, before they sing in that orchestra. You think that, die when you may, you will go to heaven, without being prepared. Nay, sir; heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and unless you are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," you can never stand there among them. If you were in heaven without a new heart and a right spirit, you would be glad enough to get out of it; for heaven, unless a man is heavenly himself, would be worse than hell. A man who is unrenewed and unregenerate going to heaven would be miserable there. There would be a song—he could not join in it; there would be a constant hallelujah, but he would not know a note: and besides, he would be in the presence of the Almighty, even in the presence of the God he hates, and how could he be happy there? No, sirs; ye must learn the song of paradise here, or else ye can never sing it. Ye must learn to sing—

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to my ears."

You must learn to feel that "sweeter sounds than music knows mingle in your Saviour's name," or else you can never chaunt the hallelujahs of the blest before the throne of the great "I AM." Take that thought, whatever else you forget; treasure it up in your memory, and ask grace of God that you may here be taught to sing the heavenly song, that afterwards in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the beautified, you may continually chaunt the high praises of him that loved you.

III. And now we come to the third and most interesting point, namely, THE LISTENING TO THEIR SONG. "I heard a voice form heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps;" singing—how loud and yet how sweet!

First, then, singing *how loud!* It is said to be "like the voice of many waters." Have you never heard the sea roar, and the fulness thereof? Have you never walked by the sea-side, when the waves were singing, and when every little pebble-stone did turn chorister, to make up music to the Lord God of hosts? And have you never in time of storm beheld the sea, with its hundred hands, clapping them in gladsome adoration of the Most High? Have you never heard the sea roar out his praise, when the winds were holding carnival—perhaps singing the dirge of mariners, wrecked far out on the stormy deep, but far more likely exalting God with their hoarse voice, and praising him who makes a thousand fleets sweep over them

in safety, and writes his furrows on their own youthful brow? Have you never heard the rumbling and booming of ocean on the shore, when it has been lashed into fury and has been driven upon the cliffs? If you have, you have a faint idea of the melody of heaven. It was “as the voice of many waters.” But do not suppose that it is the whole of the idea. It is not the voice of one ocean, but the voice of many, that is needed to give you an idea of the melodies of heaven. You are to suppose ocean piled upon ocean, sea upon sea,—the Pacific piled upon the Atlantic, the Arctic upon that, the Antarctic higher still, and so ocean upon ocean, all lashed to fury, and all sounding with a mighty voice the praise of God. Such is the singing of heaven. Or if the illustration, fails to strike, take another. We have mentioned here two or three times the mighty falls of Niagara. They can be heard at a tremendous distance, so awful is their sound. Now, suppose waterfalls dashing upon waterfalls, cataracts upon cataracts, Niagaras upon Niagaras, each of them sounding forth their mighty voices, and you have got some idea of the singing of paradise. “I heard a voice like the voice of many waters.” Can you not hear it? Ah! if our ears were opened we might almost cast the song. I have thought sometimes that the voice of the Aeolian harp, when it has swollen out grandly, was almost like an echo of the songs of those who sing before the throne; and on the summer eve, when the wind has come in gentle zephyrs through the forest, you might almost think it was the floating of some stray notes that had lost their way among the harps of heaven, and come down to us, to give us some faint foretaste of that song which hymns out in mighty peals before the throne of the Most High. But why so loud? The answer is, because there are so many there to sing. Nothing is more grand than the singing of multitudes. Many have been the persons who have told me that they could but weep when they heard you sing in this assembly, so mighty seemed the sound when all the people sang—

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

And, indeed, there is something very grand in the singing of multitudes. I remember hearing 12,000 sing on one occasion in the open air. Some of our friends were then present, when we concluded our service with that glorious hallelujah. Have you ever forgotten it? It was indeed a mighty sound; it seemed to make heaven itself ring again. Think, then, what must be the voice of those who stand on the boundless plains of heaven, and with all their might shout, “Glory and honour and power and dominion unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.”

On reason, however, why the song is so loud is a very simple one, namely, because all those who are there think themselves bound to sing the loudest of all. You know our favourite hymn—

“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While heav’n’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sov’ reign grace.”

And every saint will join that sonnet, and each one lift up his heart to God, then how mighty must be the strain of praise that will rise up to the throne of the glorious God our Father!

But note next, while it was a loud voice, how *sweet* it was. Noise is not music. There may be “a voice like many waters.” and yet no music. It was sweet as well as loud; for John says, “I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.” Perhaps the sweetest of all instruments is the harp. There are others which give forth sounds more grand and noble, but the harp is the sweetest of all instruments. I have sometimes sat to hear a skilful harper, till I could say, “I could sit and hear myself away,” whilst with skilful fingers he touched the chords gently, and brought forth strains of melody which flowed like liquid silver, or like sounding honey into one’s soul. Sweet, sweet beyond sweetness; words can scarcely tell how sweet the melody. Such is the music of heaven. No jarring notes there, no discord, but all one glorious harmonious song. You will not be there, formalist, to spoil the tune; nor you, hypocrite, to mar the melody; there will be all those there whose hearts are right with God, and therefore the strain will be one great harmonious whole, without a discord. Truly do we sing—

“No groans to mingle with the songs
That warble from immortal tongues.”

And there will be no discord of any other sort to spoil the melody of those before the throne. Oh! my beloved brethren, that we might be there! Lift us up, ye cherubs! Stretch your wings, and bear us up where the sonnets fill the air. But if ye must not, let us wait our time.

“A few more rolling suns at most,
Will land us on fair Canaan’s coast;”

and then we shall help to make the song, which now we can scarcely conceive, but which yet we desire to join.

IV. We now close with a remark upon the last point: WHY IS THE SONG SAID TO BE A NEW SONG? But one remark here. It will be a new song, because the saints were never in such a position before as they will be when they sing this new song. They are in heaven now; but the scene of our text is something more than heaven. It refers to the time when all the chosen race shall meet around the throne, when the last battle shall have been fought, and the last warrior shall have gained his crown. It is not now that they are thus singing, but it is in the glorious time to come, when all the hundred and forty and four thousand—or rather, the number typified by that number—will be all safely housed and all secure. I can conceive the period. Time was—eternity now reigns. The voice of God exclaims, “Are my beloved all safe?” The angel flies through paradise and returns with this message, “Yea, they are.” “Is *Fearful* safe? Is *Feeble-mind* safe? Is *Ready-to-Halt* safe? Is *Despondency* safe?” “Yes, O king, they are,” says he. “Shut-to the gates,” says the Almighty, “they have

been open night and day; shut them to now.” Then, when all of them shall be there, then will be the time when the shout shall be louder than many waters, and the song shall begin which will never end. There is a story told in the history of brave Oliver Cromwell, which I use here to illustrate this new song. Cromwell and his Ironsides before they went to battle bowed the knee in prayer, and asked for God’s help. Then, with their Bibles in their breasts, and their swords in their hands—a strange and unjustifiable mixture, but which their ignorance must excuse—they cried, “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge;” and rushing to battle they sang—

“O Lord our God, arise and let
Thine enemies scattered be,
And let all those that do thee hate
Before thy presence flee.

They had to fight up hill for a long time, but at last the enemy fled. The Ironsides were about to pursue them and win the booty, when the stern harsh voice of Cromwell was heard—“Halt! halt! now the victory is won, before you rush to the spoil return thanks to God;” and they sang some such song as this—“Sing unto the Lord, for he has gotten us the victory! Sing unto the Lord.” It was said to have been one of the most majestic sights in that strange, yet good man’s history. (I say that word without blushing, for good he was.) For a time the hills seemed to leap, whilst the vast multitude, turning from the slain, still stained with blood, lifted up their hearts to God. We say, again, it was a strange sight, yet a glad one. But how great shall be that sight, when Christ shall be seen as a conqueror, and when all his warriors, fighting side by side with him, shall see the dragon beaten in pieces beneath their feet. Lo, their enemies are fled; they were driven like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. They are all gone, death is vanquished, Satan is cast into the lake of fire, and here stands the King himself, crowned with many crowns, the victor of the victors. And in the moment of exaltation the Redeemer will say, “Come let us sing unto the Lord;” and then, louder than the shout of many waters, they shall sing, “Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.” Ah! that will be the full carrying out of the great scene! My feeble words cannot depict it. I send you away with this simple question, “Shall *you* be there to see the conqueror crowned?” Have *you* “a good hope through grace” that you shall? If so, be glad; if not, go to your houses, fall on your knees, and pray to God to save you from that terrible place which must certainly be your portion, instead of that great heaven of which I preach, unless you turn to God with full purpose of heart.

A Mighty Saviour

A Sermon

(No. 111)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 4, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Mighty to save.”—[Isaiah 63:1](#).

THIS, of course, refers to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who is described as “coming from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah,” and who, when it is questioned who he is, replies, “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” It will be well, then, at the commencement of our discourse to make one or two remarks concerning the mysteriously complex person of the man and God whom we call our Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Saviour. It is one of the mysteries of the Christian religion, that we are taught to believe that Christ is God, and yet a man. According to Scripture, we hold that he is “very *God*,” equal and co-eternal with the Father, possessing, as his Father doth, all divine attributes in an infinite degree. He participated with his Father in all the acts of his divine might; he was concerned in the decree of election, in the fashioning of the covenant; in the creation of the angels, in the making of the world, when it was wheeled from nothing into space, and in the ordering of this fair frame of nature. Before any of these acts the divine Redeemer was the eternal Son of God. “From everlasting to everlasting he is God.” Nor did he cease to be God when he became man. He was equally “God over all, blessed for evermore,” when he was “the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief,” as before his incarnation. We have abundant proof of that in the constant affirmations of Scripture, and, indeed, also in the miracles which he wrought. The raising of the dead, the treading of the billows of the ocean, the hushing of the winds and the rending of the rocks, with all those marvellous acts of his, which we have not time here to mention, were strong and potent proofs that he was God, most truly God, even when he condescended to be man. And Scripture, most certainly teaches us, that he is God now, that he shares the throne of his Father—that he sits “high above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named,” and is the true and proper object of the veneration, the worship, and the homage of all worlds. We are equally taught to believe that he is *man*. Scripture informs us that, on a day appointed, he came from heaven and did become man as well as God, taking upon himself the nature of a babe in the manger in Bethlehem. From that babe, we are told, he did grow to the stature of manhood, and became “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,” in everything except our sin. His sufferings, his hunger, above all, his death and burial, are strong proofs that he was man, most truly man; and yet it is demanded of us by the Christians religion, to believe, that while he was man he was most truly God. We are taught that he was a “child born, a son given,” and yet, at the same time,

the “Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father.” Whosoever would have clear and right view of Jesus, must not mingle his natures. We must not consider him as a God diluted into deified manhood, or as a mere man officially exalted to the Godhead, but as being two distinct natures in one person; not God melted into man, nor man made into God, but man and God taken into union together. Therefore, do we trust in him, as the Daysman, the Mediator, Son of God, and Son of Man. This is the person who is our Saviour. It is this glorious, yet mysterious being, of whom the text speaks, when it says, he is mighty—“mighty to save.”

That he is mighty we need not inform you; for as readers of the Scriptures you all believe in the might and majesty of the Incarnate Son of God. You believe him to be the Regent of providence, the King of death, the Conqueror of hell, the Lord of angels, the Master of storms, and the God of battles, and, therefore, you can need no proof that he is mighty. The subject of this morning is one part of his mightiness. He is “mighty to save.” May God the Holy Spirit help us in briefly entering upon this subject, and make use of it to the salvation of our souls!

First, we shall consider *what is meant by the words “to save;”* secondly, *how we prove the fact that he is “mighty to save;”*; thirdly, *the reason why he is “mighty to save;”* and then, fourthly, *the inferences which are to be deduced from the doctrine that Jesus Christ is “mighty to save.”*

I. First, then, WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE WORDS “TO SAVE?”

Commonly, most men, when they read these words, consider them to mean salvation from hell. They are partially correct, but the notion is highly defective. It is true Christ does save men from the penalty of their guilt; he does take those to heaven who deserve the eternal wrath and displeasure of the Most High; it is true that he does blot out “iniquity, transgression, and sin,” and that the iniquities of the remnant of his people are passed over for the sake of his blood and atonement. But that is not the whole meaning of the words “to save.” This deficient explanation lies at the root of mistakes which many theologians have made, and by which they have surrounded their system of divinity with mist. They have said that to save is to pluck men as brands from the burning—to save them from destruction if they repent. Now, it means vastly, I had almost said, infinitely more than this. “To save” means something more than just delivering penitents from going down to hell. By the words “to save,” I understand the whole of the great work of salvation, from the first holy desire, the first spiritual conviction, onward to complete sanctification. All this done of God through Jesus Christ. Christ is not only mighty to save those who do repent, but he is able to make men repent; he is engaged not merely to carry those to heaven who believe, but he is mighty to give men new hearts and to work faith in them; he is mighty not merely to give heaven to one who wishes for it, but he is mighty to make the man who hates holiness love it, to

constrain the despiser of his name to bend his knee before him, and to make the most abandoned reprobate turn from the error of his ways.

By the words “to save,” I do not understand what some men say they mean. They tell us in their divinity that Christ came into the world to put all men into a salvable state—to make the salvation of all men possible by their own exertions. I believe that Christ came for no such thing—that he came into the world not to put men into a *salvable* state, but into a *saved* state; not to put them where they could save themselves, but to do the work in them and for them, from the first even to the last. If I believe that Christ came only to put you, my hearers, and myself into a state where we might save ourselves, I should give up preaching henceforth and for ever; for knowing a little of the wickedness of men’s hearts, because I know something of my own—knowing how much men naturally hate the religion of Christ—I should despair of any success in preaching a gospel which I had only to offer, its effects depending upon the voluntary acceptance of it by unrenewed and unregenerate men. If I did not believe that there was a might power, and which turns them from the error of their ways by the mighty, overwhelming, constraining force of a divine and mysterious influence, I should cease to glory in the cross of Christ. Christ, we repeat, is mighty, not merely to put men into a salvable condition, but mighty absolutely and entirely to save them. This fact I regard as one of the grandest proofs of the divine character of the Bible revelation. I have many a time had doubts and fears, as most of you have had; and where is the strong believer that he not sometimes wavered? I have said, within myself, “Is this religion true, which, day after day, I incessantly preach to the people? Is it the correct one? Is it true that this religion has an influence upon mankind?” And I will tell you how I have reassured myself. I have looked upon the hundreds, nay, upon the thousands whom I have around me, who were once the vilest of the vile—drunkards, swearers, and such like—and I now see them “clothed and in their right mind,” “This must be the truth, then, because I see its marvellous effects. It is true, because it is efficient for purposes which error never could accomplish. It exerts an influence among the lowest order of mortals, and over the most abominable of our race. It is a power, an irresistible agent of good; who then shall deny its truth. I take it that the highest proof of Christ’s power is not that he offers salvation, not that he bids you take it if you will, but that when you reject it, when you hate it, when you despise it, he has a power whereby he can change your mind, make you think differently from your former thoughts, and turn you from the error of your ways. This I conceive to be the meaning of the text: “mighty to save.”

But it is not all the meaning. Our Lord is not only mighty to make men repent, to quicken the dead in sin, to turn them from their follies and their iniquities. But he is exalted to do more than that: he is mighty to keep them Christians after he has made them so, and mighty to preserve them in his fear and love, until he consummates their spiritual existence in heaven. Christ’s might doth not lie in making a believer, and then leaving him to shift

for himself afterwards; but he who begins the good work carries it on; he who imparts the first germ of life which quickens the dead soul, gives afterwards the life which prolongs the divine existence, and bestows that mighty power which at last bursts asunder every bond of sin, and lands the soul perfected in glory. We hold and teach, and we believe upon Scriptural authority, that all men unto whom Christ has given repentance must infallibly hold on their way. We do believe that God never begins a good work in a man without finishing it; that he never makes a man truly alive to spiritual things without carrying on that work in his soul even to the end, by giving him a place amongst the choirs of the sanctified. We do not think that Christ's power dwells in merely bringing me one day into grace, and then telling me to keep myself there, but in so putting me into a gracious state, and giving me such an inward life and such a power within myself that I can no more turn back than the very sun in the heavens can stay itself in its course, or cease to shine. Beloved, we regard this as signified by the terms "mighty to save." This is commonly called Calvinistic doctrine; it is none other than Christian doctrine, the doctrine of the holy Bible; for despite that it is now called Calvinism, it could not be so called in Augustine's days; and yet in Augustine's works you find the very same things. And it is not to be called Augustinism; it is to be found in the writings of the apostle Paul. And yet it was not called Paulism, simple for this reason, that it is the expansion, the fulness of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. To repeat what we have before said, we hold and boldly teach that Jesus Christ is not merely able to save men who put themselves in his way and who are willing to be saved, but that he is able to make men willing—that he is able to make the drunkard renounce his drunkenness and come to him—that he is able to make the despiser bend his knee, and make hard hearts melt before his love. Now, it is ours to show that he is able to do so.

II. HOW CAN WE PROVE THAT CHRIST IS "MIGHTY TO SAVE?"

We will give you the strongest argument first; and we shall need but one. The argument is, that he *has* done it. We need no other; it were superfluous to add another. He *has* saved them, in the full extent and meaning of the word which we have endeavoured to explain. But in order to set this truth in a clear light, we will suppose the worst of cases. It is very easy to imagine, say some, that when Christ's gospel is preached to some here who are amiable and lovely, and have always been trained up in the fear of God, they will receive the gospel in the love of it. Very well, we will not take such a case. You see this South Sea Islander. He has just been eating a diabolical meal of human flesh; he is a cannibal; at his belt are slung the scalps of men whom he has murdered, and in whose blood he glories. If you land on the coast he will eat you, too, unless you mind what you are after. That man bows himself before a block of wood. He is a poor ignorant debased creature, but very little removed from the brute. Now, has Christ's gospel power to tame that man, to take the scalps from his girdle, to make him give up his bloody practices, renounce his gods, and become a civilised and Christian man? You know, my dear friends, you talk about the power of education in

England; there may be a great deal in it; education may do very much for some who are here, not in a spiritual, but in a natural way; but what would education do with this savage: go and try. Send the best schoolmaster in England over to him: he will eat him before the day is up. That will be all the good of it. But if the missionary goes with Christ's gospel, what will become of him? Why, in multitudes of cases, he has been the pioneer of civilisation, and under the providence of God has escaped a cruel death. He goes with love in his hands and in his eyes; he speaks to the savage. And mark ye, we are telling facts now, not dreams. The savage drops his tomahawk. Says he, "It is marvellous; the things that this man tells me are wonderful, I will sit down and listen." He listens, and the tears roll down his cheeks; a feeling of humanity which never burned within his soul before is kindled in him. He says, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" and soon he is clothed and in his right mind, and becomes in every respect a man—such a man as we could desire all men to be. Now, we say, that this is proof that Christ's gospel does not come to the mind that is prepared for it, but prepares the mind for itself; that Christ does not merely put the seed into the ground that has been prepared beforehand, but ploughs the ground too—ay, and harrows it, and does the whole of the work. He is so able to do all this. Ask our missionaries who are in Africa, in the midst of the greatest barbarians in the world—ask them whether Christ's gospel is able to save, and they will point to the kraal of the Hottentot, and then they will point to the houses of the Kuraman, and they will say, "What has made this difference, but the word of the gospel of Christ Jesus?" Yes, dear brethren, we have had proofs enough in heathen countries; and why need we say more, but merely to add this—we have had proofs enough at home. There are some who preach a gospel which is very well fitted to train man in morals, but utterly unfitted to save him, a gospel which does well enough to keep men sober when they have become drunkards. It is a good thing enough to supply them with a kind of life, when they have it already, but not to quicken the dead and save the soul, and it can give up to despair the very characters whom Christ's gospel was most of all intended to affect. I could a tale unfold, of some who have plunged head-first into the blackest gulfs of sin, which would horrify you and me, if we could allow them to recount their guilt. I could tell you how they have come into God's house with their teeth set against the minister, determined that say what he would they might listen, but it would be to scoff. They stayed a moment; some word arrested their attention; they thought within themselves, "I will hear that sentence." It was some pointed, terse saying, that entered into their souls. They knew not how it was, but they were spell-bound, and stood to listen a little longer; and by-and-bye, unconsciously to themselves, the tears began to fall, and when they went away, they had a strange, mysterious feeling about them that led them to their chambers. Down they fell on their knees; the story of their life was all told before God; he gave them peace through the blood of the Lamb, and they went to God's house, many of them to say, "Come and hear what God hath done for my soul," and to

“Tell to sinners round
What a dear Saviour they had found.”

Remember the case of John Newton, the great and mighty preacher of St. Mary, Woolnoth,—an instance of the power of God to change the heart, as well as to give peace when the heart is changed. Ah! dear hearers, I often think within myself, “This is the greatest proof of the Saviour’s power.” Let another doctrine be preached: will it do the same? If it will, why not let every man gather a crowd round him and preach it. Will it really do it? If it will, then the blood of men’s souls must rest upon the man who does not boldly proclaim it. If he believes his gospel does save souls, how does the account for it that he stands in his pulpit from the first of January till the last of December, and never hears of a harlot made honest, nor of a drunkard reclaimed? Why? For this reason, that it is a poor dilution of Christianity. It is something like it, but it is not the bold, broad Christianity of the Bible; it is not the full gospel of the blessed God, for that *has* power to save. But if they do believe that theirs is the gospel, let them come out to preach it, and let them strive with all their might to win souls from sin, which is rife enough, God knows. We say again, that we have proof positive in cases even here before us, that Christ is mighty to save even the worst of men—to turn them from follies in which they have too long indulged, and we believe that the same gospel preached elsewhere would produce the same results.

The best proof you can ever have of God’s being mighty to save, dear hearers, is that he saved *you*. Ah! my dear hearer, it were a miracle if he should save thy fellow that stands by thy side; but it were more a miracle if he should save thee. What art thou this morning? Answer! “I am an infidel,” says one; “I hate and despise Christ’s religion.” But suppose, sir, there should be such a power in that religion that one day thou shouldst be brought to believe it! What wouldst thou say then? Ah! I know thou wouldst be in love with that gospel for ever; for thou wouldst say, “I above al men was the last to receive it; and yet here am I, I know now how, brought to love it.” Oh! such a man when constrained to believe makes the most eloquent preacher in the world. “Ah! but,” says another, “I have been a Sabbath-breaker upon principle, I despise the Sabbath, I hate utterly and entirely everything religious.” Well, I can never prove religion to you to be true, unless it should ever lay hold of you, and make you a new man. Then you will say there is something in it. “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.” When we have felt the change it works in ourselves, then we speak of facts, and not of fancies, and we speak very boldly too. We say again, then, he is “mighty to save.”

III. But now it is asked, WHY IS CHRIST “MIGHTY TO SAVE?” To this there are sundry answers.

First, if we understand the word “save,” in the popular acceptation of the word, which is not, after all, the full one, though a true one—if we understand salvation to mean the pardon of sin and salvation from hell, Christ is mighty to save, *because of the infinite efficacy*

of his atoning blood. Sinner! black as thou art with sin, Christ this morning is able to make thee whiter than the driven snow. Thou askest why. I will tell thee. He is able to forgive, because he has been punished for thy sin. If thou dost know and feel thyself to be a sinner, if thou hast no hope or refuge before God but in Christ, then be it known that Christ is able to forgive, because he was once punished for the very sin which thou hast committed, and therefore he can freely remit, because the punishment has been entirely paid by himself. Whenever I get on this subject I am tempted to tell a story; and though I have told it times enough in the hearing of many of you, others of you have never heard it, and it is the simplest way I know of setting out the belief I have in the atonement of Christ. Once a poor Irishman came to me in my vestry. He announced himself something in this way: "Your reverence, I'm come to ax you a question." "In the first place," said I, "I am not a reverend, nor do I claim the title; and in the next place, why don't you go and ask your priest that question?" Said he "Well, your riv—sir, I meant—I did go to him but he did not answer me to my satisfaction, exactly; so I have come to ask you, and if you will answer this you will set my mind at peace, for I am much disturbed about it." "What is the question?" said I. "Why this. You say, and others say too, that God is able to forgive sin. Now, I can't see how he can be just, and yet forgive sin: for," said this poor man, "I have been so greatly guilty that if God Almighty does not punish me he *ought*; I feel that he would not be just if he were to suffer me to go without punishment. How, then, sir, can it be true that he can forgive, and still retain the title of just?" "Well," said I, "it is through the blood and merits of Jesus Christ." "Ah!" said he, "but then I do not understand what you mean by that. It is the kind of answer I got from the priest, but I wanted him to explain it to me more fully, how it was that the blood of Christ could make God just. You say it does, but I want to know how." "Well, then," said I, "I will tell you what I think to be the whole system of atonement, which I think is the sum and substance, the root, the marrow, and the essence of the gospel. This is the way Christ is able to forgive. Suppose," said I, "you had killed some one. You were a murderer; you were condemned to die, and you deserved it." "Faith," said he, "Yes I should deserve it." "Well, her Majesty is very desirous of saving your life, and yet at the same time universal justice demands that some one should die on account of the deed that is done. Now, how is she to manage?" Said he, "That is the question. I cannot see how she can be inflexibly just, and yet suffer me to escape." "Well," said I, "suppose, Pat, I should go to her and say, 'Here is this poor Irishman, he deserved to be hanged, your Majesty; I don't want to quarrel with the sentence, because I think it just; but, if you please, I so love him that if you were to hang me instead of him I should be very willing.' Pat, suppose she should agree to it, and hang me instead of you; what then? would she be just in letting you go?" "Ay," said he, "I should think she would. Would she hang two for one thing? I should say not. I'd walk way, and there isn't a policeman that would touch me for it." "Ah!" said I, "that is how Jesus saves. 'Father,' he said, 'I love these poor sinners; let me suffer instead of them!' 'Yes,' said God,

‘thou shalt;’ and on the tree he died, and suffered the punishment which all his elect people ought to have suffered; so that now all who believe on him, thus proving themselves to be his chosen, may conclude that he was punished for them, and that therefore they never can be punished.” “Well,” said he, looking me in the face once more, “I understand what you mean; but how is it, if Christ died for all men, that notwithstanding, some men are punished again? For that is unjust.” “Ah!” said I, “I never told you that. I say to you that he has died for all that believe on him, and all who repent, and that was punished for their sins so absolutely and so really, that none of them shall ever be punished again.” “Faith,” said the man, clapping his hands, “that’s the gospel; if it isn’t, then I don’t know anything, for no man could have made that up; it is so wonderful. Ah!” he said, as he went down the stairs, “Pat’s safe now; with all his sins about him he’ll trust in the man that died for him, and so he shall be saved.” Dear hearer, Christ is mighty to save, because God did not turn away the sword, but he sheathed it in his own Son’s heart; he did not remit the debt, for it was paid in drops of precious blood; and now the great receipt is nailed to the cross, and our sins with it, so that we may go free if we are believers in him. For this reason he is “mighty to save,” in the true sense of the word.

But in the large sense of the word, understanding it to mean all that I have said it does mean, He is “mighty to save.” How is it that Christ is able to make men repent, to make men believe, and to make them turn to God? One answers, “Why by the eloquence of preachers.” God forbid we should ever say that! It is “not by might nor by power.” Other replying, “It is by the force of moral suasion.” God forbid we should say “ay” to that; for moral suasion has been tried long enough on man, and yet it has failed of success. How does he do it? We answer, by something which some of you despise, but which, nevertheless, is a fact. he does it by the Omnipotent influence of his Divine Spirit. Whilst men are hearing the word (in those whom God will save) the Holy Spirit works repentance; he changes the heart and renews the soul. True, the preaching is the instrument, but the Holy Spirit is the great agent. It is certain that the truth is the means of saving, but it is the Holy Ghost applying the truth which saves souls. Ah! and with this power of the Holy Ghost e may go to the most debased and degraded of men, and we need not be afraid but that God can save them. If God should be please, the Holy Spirit could at this moment make every one of you fall on your knees, confess your sins, and turn to God. He is an Almighty Spirit, able to do wonders. In the life of Whitfield, we read that sometimes under one of his sermons two thousand persons would at once profess to be saved, and were really so, many of them. We ask why it was. At other times he preached just as powerfully, and not one soul was saved. Why? Because in the one case the Holy Spirit went with the Word, and in the other case it did not. All the heavenly result of preaching is owing to the Divine Spirit sent from above. I am nothing; my brethren in the ministry around are all nothing; it is God that doeth everything. “Who is Paul, who is Apollos, and who is Cephas, but ministers by whom ye believed, even

as God gave to every man.” It must be “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” Go forth, poor minister! Thou has no power to preach with polished diction and elegant refinement; go and preach as thou canst. The Spirit can make thy feeble words more mighty than the most ravishing eloquence. Alas! alas! for oratory! Alas! for eloquence! It hath long enough been tried. We have had polished periods, and finely turned sentences; but in what place have the people been saved by them? We have had grand and gaudy language; but where have hearts been renewed! But now, “by the foolishness of preaching,” by the simple utterance by a child of God’s Word, he is pleased to save them that believe and to save sinners from the error of their ways. May God prove his Word again this morning!

IV. The fourth point was, WHAT ARE THE INFERENCES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST IS MIGHTY TO SAVE?

Why, first, there is a fact for ministers to learn—that they should endeavour to preach in faith, nothing wavering. “O God,” cries the minister at times, when he is on his knees, “I am weak; I have preached to my hearers, and have wept over them; I have groaned for them; but they will not turn to thee. Their hearts are like the nether mill-stone; they will not weep for sin, nor will they love the Saviour.” Then I think I see the angel standing at his elbow, and whispering in his ear, “Thou art weak, but he is strong; thou canst do nothing, but he is ‘mighty to save.’” Bethink thyself of this. It is not the instrument, but the God. It is not the pen wherewith the author writes which is to have the praise of his wisdom or the making of the volume, but it is the brain that thinks it, and the hand that moves the pen. So in salvation. It is not the minister, it is not the preacher, but the God who first designs the salvation, and afterwards uses the preacher to work it out. Ah! poor disconsolate preacher, if thou hast had but little fruit of thy ministry, go on still in faith, remembering it is written, “My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Go on; be of good courage; God shall help thee; he shall help thee, and that right early.

Again, here is another encouragement for praying men and women, who are praying to God for their friends. Mother, you have been groaning for your son for many a year; he is now grown up and has left your roof, but your prayers have not been heard. So you think. He is as gay as ever; not yet has he made your breast rejoice. Sometimes you think he will bring your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. It was but yesterday you said, “I will give him up, I will never pray for him again.” Stop, mother, stop! By all that is holy and that is heavenly, stop! Utter not that resolution again; begin once more! Thou hast prayed over him; thou didst weep over his infant forehead, when he lay in his cradle; thou didst teach him when he came to years of understanding and thou hast often warned him since; but all of no avail. Oh! give not up thy prayers; for remember, Christ is “mighty to save.” It may be that he waits to be gracious, and he keeps thee waiting, that thou mayest know more of his graciousness when the mercy comes. But pray on. I have heard of mothers who have

prayed for their children twenty years; ay, and some who have died without seeing them converted, and then their very death has been the means of saving their children, by leading them to think. A father once had been a pious man for many years, yet never had he the happiness of seeing one of his sons converted. He had his children round his bed, and he said to them when dying, "My sons, I could die in peace, if I could but believe you would follow me to heaven; but this is the most sorrowful thing of all—not that I am dying, but that I am leaving you to meet you no more." They looked at him, but they would not think on their ways. They went away. Their father was suddenly overtaken with great clouds and darkness of mind; instead of dying peacefully and happily, he died in great misery of soul, but still trusting in Christ. He said, when he died, "Oh! that I had died a happy death, for that would have been a testimony to my sons; but now, O God, this darkness and these clouds have in some degree taken away my power to witness to the truth of thy religion." Well, he died, and was buried. The sons came to the funeral. The day after, one of them said to his brother, "Brother, I have been thinking, father was always a pious man, and if his death was yet such a gloomy one, how gloomy must ours be, without God and without Christ!" "Ah!" said the other, "that thought struck me too." They went up to God's house, heard God's Word, they came home and bent their knee in prayer, and to their surprise they found that the rest of the family had done the same, and that the God who had never answered their father's prayer in his life had answered it after his death, and by his death too, and by such a death as would appear to be most unlikely to have wrought the conversion of any. Pray on, then, my sister; pray on, my brother! God shall yet bring thy sons and daughters to his love and fear, and thou shalt rejoice over them in heaven, if thou never dost on earth.

And finally, my dear hearers, there are many of you here this morning who have no love to God, no love to Christ; but you have a desire in your hearts to love him. You are saying, "Oh! can he save me? Can such a wretch as I be saved?" In the thick of the crowd there you are standing, and you are now saying within yourself, "May I one day sing among the saints above? May I have all my sins blotted out by blood divine?" "Yes, sinner, he is 'mighty to save;' and this is comfort for thee." Dost thou think thyself the worst of men? Does conscience smite thee as with a mailed fist, and does he say it is all over with thee; thou wilt be lost; thy repentance will be of no avail; thy prayers never will be heard; thou art lost to all intents and purposes? My hearer, think not so. He is "mighty to save." If thou canst not pray, he can help thee to do it; if thou canst not repent, he can give thee repentance; if thou feelest it hard to believe, he can help thee to believe, for he is exalted on high to give repentance, as well as to give remission of sins. O poor sinner, trust in Jesus; cast thyself on him. Cry, and may God help thee to do it now, the first Sabbath of the year; may he help thee this very day to cast thy soul on Jesus; and this will be one of the best years of all thy life. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Turn unto Jesus, ye wearied souls;

come unto him, for lo, he bids you come. “The Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life,” and have Christ’s grace freely. It is preached to you, and to all of you who are willing to receive it, it has been already given.

May God of his grace make you willing, and so save your souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

The War of Truth

A Sermon

(No. 112)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 11, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men and go out, fight with Amalek; to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.”—[Exodus 17:9](#).

THE CHILDREN of Israel were led out of Egypt with a strong hand and an out-stretched arm. They were conducted into the vast howling wilderness, where there were few, if any, permanent abodes of men. For some time they pursued their march in solitude, discovering wells and other traces of a nomadic population, but not meeting with any to disturb their loneliness. But it appears that then, as now, there were wandering tribes who, like the Bedouin Arabs, wandered to and fro through that very country which the people of Israel were now treading with their feet. These people, excited by the hope of spoil, fell suddenly upon the rear of the children of Israel, smote the hindmost of them in a most cowardly manner, took their spoil, and then swiftly decamped. Gathering strength and courage from this successful foray, they then dared to attack the whole host of Israel, which at that time must have amounted to two or three millions of souls, who had been brought out of Egypt and fed by miracle in the wilderness. This time Israel was not to be surprised; for Moses had said unto Joshua—“Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand;” pleading with God, in order that every blow struck with the sword might be made doubly powerful by the mighty assistance of God. We are told that a great victory was achieved; the Amalekites were put to the rout, and because of their unprovoked attack upon the children of Israel, they were condemned to extermination; for we find it written thus:—“Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi. For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

Now, beloved, this scene of warfare is not recorded in Scripture as in interesting circumstance to amuse the lover of history, but it is written for our edification; for we remember the text which says—“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our profit.” There is some profit to be derived from this—and we believe a peculiar profit, too, since God was pleased to make this the first writing commanded by Divine authority as a record for generations to come. We think that the journeys of the children of Israel furnish us with many emblems of the journey of God’s church through the world; and we believe, that this fight with Amalek is a metaphor and an emblem of that constant and daily fight which all

God's people must carry on with sins without and sins within. This morning I shall more particularly confine myself to *sin without*; I shall speak of the great battle which at the present moment is being waged for God and for his truth, against the enemies of the Cross of Christ. I shall endeavour, first, to make a few remarks upon *the war itself*, then to review *the authorised method of warfare*, which is twofold—hard blows and hard prayers, and then I shall finish by *stirring up God's church* to great and earnest diligence in the warfare for God and for his truth.

I. First, then, we shall make some remarks upon THE GREAT WARFARE which we think is typified by the content between the children of Israel and Amalek.

First of all, note that this crusade, this sacred, holy war of which I speak, is *not with men*, but with Satan and with error. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood." Christian men are not at war with any man that walks the earth. We are at war with infidelity, but the persons of infidels we love and pray for; we are at warfare with any heresy, but we have no enmity against heretics; we are opposed to, and cry war to the knife with everything that opposes God and his truth: but towards every man we would still endeavour to carry out the holy maxim, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." The Christian soldier hath no gun and no sword, for he fighteth not with men. It is with "spiritual wickedness in high places" that he fights, and with other principalities and powers than with those that sit on thrones and hold sceptres in their hands. I have marked, however, that some Christian men—and it is a feeling to which all of us are prone—are very apt to make Christ's war a war of flesh and blood, instead of a war with wrong and spiritual wickedness. Have you never noticed in religious controversies how men will fall foul of each other, and make personal remarks and abuse each other? What is that but forgetting what Christ's war is? We are not fighting against men; we are fighting *for* men rather than *against* them. We are fighting for God and his truth against error and against sin; but not against men. Woe, woe, to the Christian who forgets this sacred canon of warfare. Touch not the persons of men, but smite their sin with a stout heart and with strong arm. Slay both the little ones and the great; let nothing be spared that is against God and his truth; but we have no war with the persons of poor mistaken men. Rome we hate even as we abhor hell, yet for her votaries we ever pray. Idolatry and infidelity we fiercely denounce, but the men who debase themselves by either of them are the objects not of wrath, but pity. We fight not against the men, but against the things which we consider in God's sight to be wrong. Let us always make that distinction, otherwise the conflict with Christ's church will be degraded into a mere battle of brute force and garments rolled in blood; and so the world will again be an Aceldama—a field of blood. It is this mistake which has nailed martyrs to the stake and cast confessors into prison, because their opponents could not distinguish between the imaginary error and the man. While they spoke stoutly against the seeming error; in their ignorant bigotry they felt that they must also persecute the man, which they need not and ought not to have done.

I will never be afraid to speak out my mind with all the Saxon words I can get together, and I am not afraid of saying hard things against the devil, and against what the devil teaches; but with every man in the wide world I am friends, nor is there one living with whom I am at enmity for a moment any more than with the babe that has just been brought into the world. We must hate error, we must abhor falsehood; but we must not hate men, for God's warfare is against sin. May God help us always to make that distinction.

But now let us observe that the warfare which the Christian carries on, may be said for his encouragement, to be a most *righteous* warfare. In every other conflict in which men have engaged, there have been two opinions, some have said the war was right, and some have said it was wrong; but in regard to the sacred war in which all believers have been engaged, there has been only one opinion among right-minded men. When the ancient priest stirred up the Crusaders to the fight, he made them shout *Deus vult—God wills it*. And we may far more truly say the same. A war against falsehood, a war against sin, is God's war; it is a war which commends itself to every Christian man, seeing he is quite certain that he has the seal of God's approval when he goes to wage war against God's enemies. Beloved, we have no doubt whatever, when we lift up our voices like a trumpet against sin, that our warfare is justified by the eternal laws of justice. Would to God that every war had so just and true an excuse as the war which God wages with Amalek—with sin in the world!

Let us recollect again, that it is a war of the *greatest importance*. In other wars it is sometimes said—"Britons! fight for your hearths and your homes, for your wives and for your children—fight and repel the foe!" But in this war it is not merely for our hearths and for our homes, for our wives and for our children, but it is for something more than this. It is not against them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but it is a fight for souls, for eternity, against those who would plunge man into eternal perdition, a fight for God, for the deliverance of men's souls from wrath to come. It is a war which ought, indeed, to be commenced, to be followed up, and carried out in spirit, by the whole army of God's elect, seeing that no war can be more important. The instrumental salvation of men is above all things the highest object to which we can attain, and the routing of the foes of truth is a victory beyond all things to be desired. Religion must be the foundation of every blessing which society can hope to enjoy. Little as men think it, religion has much to do with our liberty, our happiness, and our comfort. England would not have been what it now is, if it had not been for her religion; and in that hour when she shall forsake her God, her glory shall have fallen, and "Ichabod" shall be written upon her banners.

In that day when the Gospel shall be silenced, when our ministers shall cease to preach; when the Bible shall be chained; in that day—God forbid it should ever come to pass—in that day, England may write herself among the dead, for she hath fallen, since God hath forsaken her, seeing she hath cast off her allegiance to him. Christian men, in this fight for

right, ye are fighting for your nation, for your liberties, your happiness and your peace; for unless religion, the religion of heaven be maintained, these will most certainly be destroyed.

Let us reflect, in the next place, that we are fighting with insidious and very *powerful foes*, in this great warfare for God and Christ. Let me again make the remark, that whilst speaking of certain characters, I am not speaking of the men, but of their errors. At this time we have peculiar difficulties in the great content for truth—peculiar, because very few appreciate them. We have enemies of all classes, and all of them far wider awake than we are. The infidel hath his eyes wide open, he is spreading his doctrines everywhere; and while we think—good easy men—that full surely our greatness is ripening, that frost is nipping many of our fair shoots, and unless we awaken, God help us! In almost every place infidelity seems to have a great away; not the bold bragging infidelity of Tom Payne, but a more polite and moderate infidelity; not that which slayeth religion with a bludgeon, but that which seeks to poison it with a small dose of poison, and goeth its way, and saith still it hath not hurt public morals. Everywhere this is increasing; I fear that the great mass of our population are imbued with an infidel spirit. Then we have more to fear than some of us suppose from Rome; not from Rome openly; from that we have little to fear; God hath given to the people of England such a bold Protestant spirit, that any open innovation from the Pope of Rome would be instantly repelled; but I mean the Romanism that has crept into the Church of England under the name of Puseyism. Everywhere that has increased; they are beginning to light candles on the altar, which is only a prelude to those greater lights with which they would consume our Protestantism. Oh! that there were men who would unmask them! We have much to fear from them; but I would not care one whit for that if it were not for something which is even worse. We have to deal with a spirit, I know not how to denominate it, unless I call it a spirit of moderatism in the pulpits of protestant churches. Men have begun to rub off the rough edges of truth, to give up the doctrines of Luther and Zwingle, and Calvin, and to endeavour to accommodate them to polished tastes. You might go into a Roman Catholic chapel now-a-days, and hear as good a sermon from a Popish priest as you hear in many cases from a Protestant minister, because he does not touch disputed points, or bring out the angular parts of our Protestant religion. Mark, too, in the great majority of our books what a dislike there is to sound doctrine! the writers seem to fancy that truth is of no more value than error; that as for the doctrines we preach, it cannot matter what they are; still holding that

“He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

There is creeping into the pulpits of Baptists and every other denomination, a lethargy and coldness, and with that a sort of nullification of all truth. While they for the most part preach but little notable error, yet *the truth* itself is uttered in so minute a form that no one detects it, and in so ambiguous a style, that no one is struck with it. So far as man can do it, God’s arrows are blunted, and the edge of his sword is turned in the day of battle. Men do

not hear the truth as they used to. The velvet mouth is succeeding to the velvet cushion, and the organ is the only thing in the building which giveth forth a *certain* sound. From all such things, “good Lord deliver us!” May heaven put an end to all this moderatism; we want out-and-out truth in these perilous days; we want a man just now to speak as God tells him, and care for nobody. Oh! if we had some of the old Scotch preachers! Those Scotch preachers made kings tremble; they were no men’s servants; they were very lords, wherever they went, because each of them said, “God has given me a message; my brow is like adamant against men; I will speak what God bids me.” Like Micah, they said, “As the Lord my God liveth, whatsoever my God saith unto me, that will I speak.” Heroes of the truth, soldiers of Christ awake! Even now there are enemies. Think not that the fight is over; the great warfare of truth waxes more hot and fierce than ever. Oh! soldiers of Christ! take your swords from your scabbards! stand up for God and for his truth again, lest a free grace gospel should be forgotten.

Let me just say, once more, concerning this war, that it is one that is to be of *perpetual duration*. Let us recollect, my beloved, that this war between right and wrong must be continued, and never must cease until truth has the victory. If you suppose that our forefathers did enough for truth and for God, and that you may be idle, you have made a great mistake. Until that day when the might with the right, and the right with the might shall be, we must never sheathe our swords; until that happy hour when Christ shall reign, when he shall be Master of all lands, when “swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks,” and men shall not learn way any more; until that day the conflict is to be kept up. Let no man think we are in such a position that we have no need for watchfulness: terrible as the war has been before, it is as terrible now, though in another manner. We have not now to resist unto blood, striving against sin, but we have need of as stern a power of resistance as ever was possessed by martyrs and confessors in days gone by. Brethren, we must awake; the army must be aroused, the soldiers of the Lord must be quickened to a consciousness of their position. Now, now, we blow the trumpet; rush to the fight ye slumbering soldiers! Up, up, up! Let your banners wave, and let your swords be taken from your scabbards; it is a day of fight—a day of war and contention.

I cannot, however, conclude this section of my discourse without remarking that it is not merely error in religion with which we have to fight, but error in practice. Oh! beloved this world is a wicked world still, and London is an abominable city still. We have a fine gloss everywhere—a fair exterior, but, alas, within the hidden parts sin is still dominant. This is the great city of pretence, the gaudy house of sham, the foul home of pollution. Our streets are lined with fair houses; but what have we behind them? what have we there, in the very vitals of our city? This city is a colossal culprit, it is a behemoth sinner, and everywhere there are those who live in the vilest of vices, and yet go unchecked and unreprieved, for it is unfashionable to tell men of their sins and there are few who have the spirit to speak

out plainly of men's sins. When we consider the mass of female profligacy which numbers its votaries by tens of thousands, are we not driven to conclude that the same sin must be rife enough with *men*. And ah! that there should be need to utter it. Are not the men who ensnare and seduce the poor unfortunates, allowed to enter society as respectable and moral. What is this but abominable hypocrisy. We are greater sinners in London than many suppose. Everything is painted over. But think not that you can deceive God in this way? Sin is stalking through the land at a horrid pace; iniquity still runs down our streets, covered up, it is true, not open sin, but still offensive alike to God and to good men. Oh! my brethren, the world is not good yet; it is filmed over, but all the while the loathsome disease lurks within. Up, again, I say, soldiers of Christ; the war against sin is not finished, it is scarce begun.

II. But now, secondly, we have to notice, briefly the APPOINTED MEANS OF WARFARE. When Amalek came out against Israel, God appointed two means of combating them. If he had chosen, he could have sent a wind and driven them away, or have cut off their hosts by the blast of the pestilence; but it did not so please him; for he would put honor upon human effort, and, therefore, he said to Joshua, "Choose out your men, and go fight with Amalek." It is true Joshua might, by God's strength, have overcome the foe; but says God, "While I honor human effort, I will still make men see that God doeth all. Moses! go up to yonder hill; stand there in prayer, hold up thy rod, and whilst the soldiers of Joshua rush into the fight, Moses shall plead, and you shall be unitedly successful. Your prayer, O Moses, without the sword of Joshua, shall not prosper; and the sword of Joshua, without the rod of Moses, shall not be effectual." The two ways of fighting sin are these—hard blows and hard prayers.

First, the church must employ hard blows and hard fighting against sin. It is of no use for you to shut yourselves up in your houses, and pray to God to stay sin, unless you go and do something yourselves. If you pray away till you are dumb, you shall never have a blessing unless you exert yourselves. Let the farmer pray for a harvest; will he ever have it, unless he ploughs the field and then sows his seed? Let the warrior pray for victory, and let his soldiers stand peacefully to be shot at, will he gain a triumph? No, there must be an active exercise of the power given by God, or else prayer without it will be of no avail. Let us, then, brethren and sisters, each in our spheres, deal hard blows at the enemy. This is a fight in which all can do something who are the Lord's people. Those who halt upon their crutches can use them for weapons of war, as well as the mighty men can wield their swords! We have each an allotted work to do, if we are the Lord's elect; let us take care that we do it. You are a tract distributor; go on with your work, do it earnestly. You are a Sunday-school teacher; go on, do not stay in that blessed work, do it as unto God, and not as unto man. You are a preacher; preach as God giveth you ability, remembering that he requireth of no man more than he hath given to him; therefore, be not discouraged if you have little success, still go

on. Are you like Zebulon, one that can handle the pen? Handle it wisely; and you shall smite through the loins of kings therewith. And if you can do but little, at least furnish the shot for others, that so you may help them in their works of faith and their labours of love. But let us all do something for Christ. I will never believe there is a Christian in the world who cannot do something. There is not a spider hanging on the king's wall but hath its errand; there is not a nettle that groweth in the corner of the churchyard but hath its purpose; there is not a single insect fluttering in the breeze but accomplisheth some divine decree; and I will never have it that God created any man, especially any Christian man, to be a blank, and to be a nothing. He made you for an end. Find out what that end is; find out your niche, and fill it. If it be ever so little, if it is only to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water, do something in this great battle for God and truth. Joshua must go out and take his men. I think I see him; he appears to have been a man of war from his youth; but what a motley host he had to choose from! Why, they were a set of slaves; they had never seen a sword in their lives, except in the hands of the Egyptians; they were poor, miserable creatures; they were cowards when they saw their old enemies at the Red Sea, and now their weapons were those which were washed up from the Red Sea, and their regimentals were of all descriptions upon earth. Joshua, however, chooses out the strongest of them, and says, "Come with me." It was indeed, as one called it, a "ragged regiment" with which he went to fight: and yet the ragged regiment was the victorious one. Joshua won the day against the Amalekites, who had been trained to a predatory life. So, ye children of God, ye may know little of the tactics of warfare, your enemies may overthrow you in arguments, and annihilate you in logic; but, if you are God's children, they that are with you are more than a match for your foes; you shall live to see them yet dead upon the field; only fight on with faith in God, and you shall be victorious.

But this is not all. Joshua might have fought; but he would have been routed, had it not been for Moses on the brow of the hill. They were both necessary. Do you not see the battle! It is not on a very large scale, but it is still worthy of your earnest attention. There is Amalek, rushing to the war with discordant cries; see, Israel is repulsing them, and Amalek flees! But what is it that I notice? Now Israel turns back and flees; now again they rally and Amalek is put to the flight! Lo! they are cut to pieces by the sword of Joshua, and mighty Amalek wavers like the corn beneath the mower's scythe. The crowd of Amalek are dropping. But again! again the battle wavers; Joshua flees; but once again he rallies his troops! And have you not observed the wonderful phenomenon? There, on the brow of the hill stands Moses. You will notice that when his hands were outstretched, Israel routed Amalek; but the moment when from weariness he dropped his hands, then Amalek had a temporary victory; and when again he held up his rod, Israel routed the foe. Each time the hand of prayer fell down, victory wavered between the combatants. Do you see the venerable intercessor? Moses, being an aged man, becomes weary from standing so many hours, they seat him upon a stone;

still, arms are not iron, and the hands are drooping; but see! his eyes are flashing fire, and his hands are lifted up to heaven; tears are beginning to flow down his cheeks and his ejaculatory prayers are going to heaven like so many darts, which shall find their target in the ear of God. Do you see him, He is the hinge of victory; as he falters Amalek prevails; and as he is strong the chosen people gain the victory. See! Aaron is holding his hand for a moment; and anon Hur is supporting it, and the good old man changes his hands, for the battle lasts all day long, and in the hot sun it is wearisome work to hold them in one position. But see how manfully he holds them; stiff, as though they were cut out of stone; weary and worn, still his hands are out-stretched, as if he were a statue, and his friends assist his zeal. And see now, the ranks of Amalek are broken like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. They fly! they fly! Still his hands are motionless; still they fight; still the Amalekites fly; still Joshua prevails, until at last all the foes lie dead on the plain, and Joshua returns with the shout of joy.

Now this teaches that there must be prayer as well as effort. Minister! preach on; you shall have no success unless you pray. If you do not know how to wrestle with God on your knees, you will find it hard work to wrestle with men on your feet in the pulpit. You may make efforts to do so, but you shall not be successful, unless you back up your efforts with prayer. You are not so likely to fail in your efforts as in your prayers. We never read that Joshua's hand was weary with wielding the sword, but Moses' hand was weary with holding the rod. The more spiritual the duty, the more apt we are to tire of it. We could stand and preach all day, but we could not be in our closets all day one-half so easily. To spend a night with God in prayer would be far more difficult than to spend a night with men in preaching. Oh! take care, take care, church of Christ, that thou dost not cease thy prayers! Above all, I speak to my own much loved church, my own people. You have loved me, and I have loved you, and God has given us great success, and blessed us. But, mark, I trace all of it to your prayers. You have assembled together in multitudes, perfectly unparalleled, to pray for me on each Monday evening, and I know I am mentioned at your family altars, as one who is very dear to your hearts; but I am afraid lest you should cease your prayers. Let the world say, "Down with him;" I will stand against them all, if you will pray for me; but if you cease your prayers it is all up with me and all over with you. Your prayers make us mighty; the praying legion is the thundering legion. If I might compare myself to a military commander, I should say, that when I see my men rise to pray in such large numbers, I feel like Napoleon, when he sent out his old guards. The battle had wavered; "There," said he, "they go; now the victory is sure." Or, like our own guards, the black caps, who, wherever they went carried victory with them. The praying legion is a thundering legion everywhere. Men can stand against anything but prayer. We would pray the very gates of hell off their hinges, if we could pray as some men have done. Oh! that we had might in prayer. Do not, I beseech you, I entreat you, do not cease to pray; cease what you please, but do not give up that; down on

your knees, wrestle with God, and verily the Lord our God will bless us, “and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

III. And now I am to close up with just a few remarks, in the third place, TO STIR YOU UP TO THE WARFARE. Remember, O children of God, that there are many things that should make you valiant for God and for his truth. The first thing I will bring to your remembrance is the fact, that this warfare in which you are engaged is an *hereditary* warfare; it is not one which *you* began, but it is one which has been handed to you from the moment when the blood of Abel cried aloud for vengeance. Each martyr that has died has passed the blood-red flag to the next, and he in his turn has passed it on to another. Every confessor who has been nailed to the stake to burn, has lit his candle, and handed it to another, and said, “Take care of that!” And now here is the old “sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” Remember what hands have handled the hilt; remember what arms have wielded it; remember how often it has “pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow.” Will you disgrace it. *Will you disgrace it?* There is the great banner: it has waved in many a breeze; long ere the flag of this our land was made, this flag of Christ was born aloft, Will you stain it? *Will you stain it?* Will you not hand it to your children, still unsullied, and say, “Go on, go on; we leave you the heritage of war; go on, go on, and conquer. What your fathers did, do you again; still keep up the war, till time shall end.” I love my Bible because it is a Bible baptized with blood; I love it all the better, because it has the blood of Tyndal on it; I love it, because it has on it the blood of John Bradford, and Rowland Taylor, and Hooper; I love it, because it is stained with blood. I sometimes think I like the baptismal pool because that has been stained with blood, and is now upon the continent, forbidden by law. I love it, because I see in it the blood of men and of women who had been martyred, because they loved the truth. Will you not, then, stand by the banner of truth, after such an illustrious pedigree of warriors have held it in their hands?

I would that I could have addressed you as I desired, but my voice fails me; I cannot, therefore, urge you, except by one consideration, and that is, the prospect of ultimate victory. It is certain that ere long we shall triumph; therefore let us not give up the fight. I have been much gratified of late to hear that there is a revival in the ranks of Christ’s church; here and there I hear of great evangelists who are starting up. Some have said to me, when they have mentioned their names, “What say you to them?” My answer is, “Would God that all the Lord’s servants were prophets!” Oh! that God might send thousands and thousands of men, who would gather multitudes together to hear his word. I would that the day were come, when every church and every chapel in England were as full of souls as this, and as large as this. I do think the churches are reviving; but if they are not, still victory is certain—God will still get the victory; Jehovah will triumph. Satan may dream he will, but he will not. Therefore, men and brethren, on to victory; let the crown that is before you, nerve you to the fight; to victory; to victory; and on, on, on! for God is with you. Remember the great

intercessor; Christ is on the hill, and whilst you are in the valley he pleads, and must prevail, therefore, go on, and conquer, for Christ's sake!

I can no longer address you, but must finish up by repeating the words with which I always like to conclude my sermons: "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned!" Oh! that ye would believe in Christ; oh! that God would give you faith to put your trust in him; this is the only way of salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."

Confession of Sin—A Sermon With Seven Texts

A Sermon

(No. 113)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 18, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

My sermon this morning will have seven texts, and yet I pledge myself that there shall be but three different words in the whole of them; for it so happens that the seven texts are all alike, occurring in seven different portions of God's holy Word. I shall require, however, to use the whole of them to exemplify different cases; and I must request those of you who have brought your Bibles with you to refer to the texts as I shall mention them.

The subject of this morning's discourse will be this—CONFESSION OF SIN. We know that this is absolutely necessary to salvation. Unless there be a true and hearty confession of our sins to God, we have no promise that we shall find mercy through the blood of the Redeemer. "Whosoever confesseth his sins and forsaketh them shall find mercy." But there is no promise in the Bible to the man who will not confess his sins. Yet, as upon every point of Scripture there is a liability of being deceived, so more especially in the matter of confession of sin. There be many who make a confession, and a confession before God, who notwithstanding, receive no blessing, because their confession has not in it certain marks which are required by God to prove it genuine and sincere, and which demonstrate it to be the work of the Holy Spirit. My text this morning consists of three words, "I have sinned." And you will see how these words, in the lips of different men, indicate very different feelings. While one says, "I have sinned," and receives forgiveness; another we shall meet with says, "I have sinned," and goes his way to blacken himself with worse crimes than before, and dive into greater depths of sin than heretofore he had discovered.

The Hardened Sinner.

PHARAOH—"I have sinned."—*Exodus 9:27*.

I. The first case I shall bring before you is that of the HARDENED SINNER, who, when under terror, says, "I have sinned." And you will find the text in the book of Exodus, the 9th chap. and 27th verse: "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked."

But why this confession from the lips of the haughty tyrant? He was not often wont to humble himself before Jehovah. Why doth the proud one bow himself? You will judge of the value of his confession when you hear the circumstances under which it was made. "And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So that

there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.” “Now,” says Pharaoh, whilst the thunder is rolling through the sky, while the lightning-flashes are setting the very ground on fire, and while the hail is descending in big lumps of ice, now, says he, “I have sinned.” He is but a type and specimen of multitudes of the same class. How many a hardened rebel on ship-board, when the timbers are strained and creaking, when the mast is broken, and the ship is drifting before the gale, when the hungry waves are opening their mouths to swallow the ship up alive and quick as those that go into the pit—how many a hardened sailor has then bowed his knee, with tears in his eyes, and cried, “I have sinned!” But of what avail and of what value was his confession? The repentance that was born in the storm died in the calm; that repentance of his that was begotten amidst the thunder and the lightning, ceased so soon as all was hushed in quiet, and the man who was a pious mariner when on board ship, became the most wicked and abominable of sailors when he placed his foot on *terra firma*. How often, too, have we seen this in a storm of thunder and lightning? Many a man’s cheek is blanched when he hears the thunder rolling; the tears start to his eyes, and he cries, “O God, I have sinned!” while the rafters of his house are shaking, and the very ground beneath him reeling at the voice of God which is full of majesty. But alas, for such a repentance! When the sun again shines, and the black clouds are withdrawn, sin comes again upon the man, and he becomes worse than before. How many of the same sort of confessions, too, have we seen in times of cholera, and fever, and pestilence! Then our churches have been crammed with hearers, who, because so many funerals have passed their doors, or so many have died in the street, could not refrain from going up to God’s house to confess their sins. And under that visitation, when one, two, and three have been lying dead in the house, or next door, how many have thought they would really turn to God! But, alas! when the pestilence had done its work, conviction ceased; and when the bell had tolled the last time for a death caused by cholera, then their hearts ceased to beat with penitence, and their tears did flow no more.

Have I any such here this morning? I doubt not I have hardened persons who would scorn the very idea of religion, who would count me a cant and hypocrite if I should endeavour to press it home upon them, but who know right well that religion is true, and who feel it in their times of terror! If I have such here this morning, let me solemnly say to them, “Sirs, you have forgotten the feelings you had in your hours of alarm; but, remember, God has not forgotten the vows you then made.” Sailor, you said if God would spare you to see the land again, you would be his servant; you are not so, you have lied against God, you have made him a false promise, for you have never kept the vow which your lips did utter. You said, on a bed of sickness, that if he would spare your life you would never again sin as you did before; but here you are, and this week’s sins shall speak for themselves. You are no better than you were before your sickness. Couldst thou lie to thy fellow-man, and yet go

unreproved? And thinkest thou that thou wilt lie against God, and yet go unpunished? No; the vow, however rashly made, is registered in heaven; and though it be a vow which man cannot perform, yet, as it is a vow which he has made himself, and made voluntarily too, he shall be punished for the non-keeping it; and God shall execute vengeance upon him at last, because he said he would turn from his ways, and then when the blow was removed he did it not. A great outcry has been raised of late against tickets-of-leave; I have no doubt there are some men here, who before high heaven stand in the same position as the ticket-of-leave men stand to our government. They were about to die, as they thought; they promised good behaviour if they might be spared, and they are here to-day on ticket-of-leave in this world: and how have they fulfilled their promise? Justice might raise the same outcry against them as they do against the burglars so constantly let loose upon us. The avenging angel might say, "O God, these men said, if they were spared they would be so much better; if anything they are worse. How have they violated their promise, and how have they brought down divine wrath upon their heads!" This is the first style of penitence; and it is a style I hope none of you will imitate, for it is utterly worthless. It is of no use for you to say, "I have sinned," merely under the influence of terror, and then to forget it afterwards.

The Double-minded Man.

BALAAAM—"I have sinned."—*Numbers 22:34*.

II. Now for a second text. I beg to introduce to you another character—the *double-minded man*, who says, "I have sinned," and feels that he has, and feels it deeply too, but who is so worldly-minded that he "loves the wages of unrighteousness." The character I have chosen to illustrate this, is that of Balaam. Turn to the book of Numbers, the 22nd chap. and the 34th verse: "And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned."

"I have sinned," said Balaam; but yet he went on with his sin afterwards. One of the strangest characters of the whole world is Balaam. I have often marvelled at that man; he seems really in another sense to have come up to the lines of Ralph Erskine—

"To good and evil equal bent,
And both a devil and a saint."

For he did seem to be so. At times no man could speak more eloquently and more truthfully, and at other times he exhibited the most mean and sordid covetousness that could disgrace human nature. Think you see Balaam; he stands upon the brow of the hill, and there lie the multitudes of Israel at his feet; he is bidden to curse them, and he cries, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?" And God opening his eyes, he begins to tell even about the coming of Christ, and he says, "I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not nigh." And then he winds up his oration by saying—"Let me die the death of

the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" And ye will say of that man, he is a hopeful character. Wait till he has come off the brow of the hill, and ye will hear him give the most diabolical advice to the king of Moab which it was even possible for Satan himself to suggest. Said he to the king, "You cannot overthrow these people in battle, for God is with them; try and entice them from their God." And ye know how with wanton lusts they of Moab tried to entice the children of Israel from allegiance to Jehovah; so that this man seemed to have the voice of an angel at one time, and yet the very soul of a devil in his bowels. He was a terrible character; he was a man of two things, a man who went all the way with two things to a very great extent. I know the Scripture says, "No man can serve two masters." Now this is often misunderstood. Some read it, "No man can *serve two* masters." Yes he can; he can serve three or four. The way to read it is this: "No man can serve two *masters*," They cannot both be masters. He can serve two, but they cannot both be his master. A man can serve two who are not his masters, or twenty either; he may live for twenty different purposes, but he cannot live for more than one master purpose—there can only be one master purpose in his soul. But Balaam laboured to serve two; it was like the people of whom it was said, "They feared the Lord, and served other gods." Or like Rufus, who was a loaf of the same leaven; for you know our old king Rufus painted God on one side of his shield, and the devil on the other, and had underneath, the motto: "Ready for both; catch who can." There are many such, who are ready for both. They meet a minister, and how pious and holy they are; on the Sabbath they are the most respectable and upright people in the world, as you would think; indeed they effect a drawling in their speech, which they think to be eminently religious. But on a week day, if you want to find the greatest rogues and cheats, they are some of those men who are so sanctimonious in their piety. Now, rest assured, my hearers, that no confession of sin can be genuine, unless it be a whole hearted one. It is of no use for you to say, "I have sinned," and then keep on sinning. "I have sinned," say you, and it is a fair, fair face you show; but, alas! alas! for the sin you will go away and commit. Some men seem to be born with two characters. I remarked when in the library at Trinity College, Cambridge, a very fine statue of Lord Byron. The librarian said to me, "Stand here, sir." I looked, and I said, "What a fine intellectual countenance! What a grand genius he was!" "Come here," he said, "to the other side." "Ah! what a demon! There stands the man that could defy the deity." He seemed to have such a scowl and such a dreadful leer in his face; even as Milton would have painted Satan when he said—"Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven." I turned away and said to the librarian, "Do you think the artist designed this?" "Yes," he said, "he wished to picture the two characters—the great, the grand, the almost superhuman genius that he possessed, and yet the enormous mass of sin that was in his soul." There are some men here of the same sort. I dare say, like Balaam, they would overthrow everything in argument with their enchantments; they could work miracles; and yet at the same time there is something about them which betrays a horrid character of sin, as

great as that which would appear to be their character for righteousness. Balaam, you know, offered sacrifices to God upon the altar of Baal: that was just the type of his character. So many do; they offer sacrifices to God on the shrine of Mammon; and whilst they will give to the building of a church, and distribute to the poor, they will at the other door of their counting-house grind the poor for bread, and press the very blood out of the widow, that they may enrich themselves. Ah! it is idle and useless for you to say, "I have sinned," unless you mean it from your heart. That double minded man's confession is of no avail.

The Insincere Man.

SAUL—"I have sinned."—*1 Samuel 15:24.*

III. And now a third character, and a third text. In the first book of Samuel, the 15th chap. and 24th verse: "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned."

Here is the *insincere man*—the man who is not like Balaam, to a certain extent sincere in two things; but the man who is just the opposite—who has no prominent point in his character at all, but is moulded everlastingly by the circumstances that are passing over his head. Such a man was *Saul*. Samuel reproved him, and he said, "I have sinned." But he did not mean what he said: for if you read the whole verse you will find him saying, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words; *because I feared the people.*" which was a lying excuse. Saul never feared anybody; he was always ready enough to do his own will—he was the despot. And just before he had pleaded another excuse, that he had saved the bullocks and lambs to offer to Jehovah, and therefore both excuses could not have been true. You remember, my friends, that the most prominent feature in the character of Saul. was his insincerity. One day he fetched David from his bed, as be-thought, to put him to death in his house. Another time he declares, "God forbid that I should do aught against thee, my son David." One day, because David saved his life, he said, "Thou art more righteous than I; I will do so no more." The day before he had gone out to fight against his own son-in-law, in order to slay him. Sometimes Saul was among the prophets, easily turned into a prophet, and then afterwards among the witches; sometimes in one place, and then another, and insincere in everything. How many such we have in every Christian assembly; men who are very easily moulded! Say what you please to them, they always agree with you. They have affectionate dispositions, very likely a tender conscience; but then the conscience is so remarkably tender, that when touched it seems to give, and you are afraid to probe deeper,—it heals as soon it is wounded. I think I used the very singular comparison once before, which I must use again: there are some men who seem to have india-rubber hearts. If you do but touch them, there is an impression made at once; but then it is of no use, it soon restores itself to its original character. You may press them whatever way you wish, they are so elastic you can always effect your purpose; but then they

are not fixed in their character, and soon return to be what they were before. O sirs, too many of you have done the same; you have bowed your heads in church, and said, “We have erred and strayed from thy ways;” and you did not mean what you said. You have come to your minister; you have said, “I repent of my sins;” you did not then feel you were a sinner; you only said it to please him. And now you attend the house of God; no one more impressive than you; the tear will run down your cheek in a moment, but yet, notwithstanding all that, the tear is dried as quickly as it is brought forth, and you remain to all intents and purposes the same as you were before. To say, “I have sinned,” in an unmeaning manner, is worse than worthless, for it is a mockery of God thus to confess with insincerity of heart.

I have been brief upon this character; for it seemed to touch upon that of Balaam; though any thinking man will at once see there was a real contrast between Saul and Balaam, even though there is an affinity between the two. Balaam was the great bad man, great in all he did; Saul was little in everything except in stature, little in his good and little in his vice; and he was too much of a fool to be desperately bad, though too wicked to be at any time good: while Balaam was great in both: the man who could at one time defy Jehovah, and yet at another time could say, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.”

The Doubtful Penitent.

ACHAN—“I have sinned.”—*Joshua 7:20*.

IV. And now I have to introduce to you a very interesting case; it is the case of the doubtful penitent, the case of *Achan*, in the book of Joshua, the 7th chap. and the 20th verse:—“And Achan answered Joshua, indeed I have sinned.”

You know that Achan stole some of the prey from the city of Jericho—that he was discovered by lot, and put to death. I have singled this case out as the representative of some whose characters are doubtful on their death beds; who do repent apparently, but of whom the most we can say is, that we hope their souls are saved at last, but indeed we cannot tell. Achan, you are aware, was stoned with stones, for defiling Israel. But I find in the Mishna, an old Jewish exposition of the Bible, these words, “Joshua said to Achan, the Lord shall trouble thee *this* day.” And the note upon it is—He said *this* day, implying that he was only to be troubled in this life, by being stoned to death, but that God would have mercy on his soul, seeing that he had made a full confession of his sin.” And I, too, am inclined, from reading the chapter, to concur in the idea of my venerable and now glorified predecessor, Dr. Gill, in believing that Achan really was saved, although he was put to death for the crime, as an example. For you will observe how kindly Joshua spoke to him. He said, “My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.” And you find Achan making a very full confession.

He says, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." It seems so full a confession, that if I might be allowed to judge, I should say, "I hope to meet Achan the sinner, before the throne of God." But I find Matthew Henry has no such opinion; and many other expositors consider that as his body was destroyed, so was his soul. I have, therefore, selected his case, as being one of doubtful repentance. Ah! dear friends, it has been my lot to stand by many a death-bed, and to see many such a repentance as this; I have seen the man, when worn to a skeleton, sustained by pillows in his bed; and he has said, when I have talked to him of judgment to come, "Sir, I feel I have been guilty, but Christ is good; I trust in him." And I have said within myself, "I believe the man's soul is safe." But I have always come away with the melancholy reflection that I had no proof of it, beyond his own words; for it needs proof in acts and in future life, in order to sustain any firm conviction of a man's salvation. You know that great fact, that a physician once kept a record of a thousand persons who thought they were dying, and whom he thought were penitents; he wrote their names down in a book as those, who, if they had died, would go to heaven; they did not die, they lived; and he says that out of the whole thousand he had not three persons who turned out well afterwards, but they returned to their sins again, and were as bad as ever. Ah! dear friends, I hope none of you will have such a death-bed repentance as that; I hope your minister or your parents will not have to stand by your bedside, and then go away and say, "Poor fellow, I hope he is saved. But alas! death-bed repentances are such flimsy things; such poor, such trivial grounds of hope, that I am afraid, after all, his soul may be lost." Oh! to die with a full assurance; oh! to die with an abundant entrance, leaving a testimony behind that we have departed this life in peace! That is a far happier way than to die in a doubtful manner, lying sick, hovering between two worlds, and neither ourselves nor yet our friends knowing to which of the two worlds we are going. May God grant us grace to give in our lives evidences of true conversion, that our case may not be doubtful!

The Repentance of Despair.

JUDAS—"I have sinned."—[Matthew 27:4](#).

V. I shall not detain you too long, I trust, but I must now give you another bad case; the worst of all. It is the REPENTANCE OF DESPAIR. Will you turn to the 27th chap. of Matthew, and the 4th verse? There you have a dreadful case of the repentance of despair. You will recognize the character the moment I read the verse: "And Judas said, I have sinned." Yes, Judas the traitor, who had betrayed his Master, when he saw that his Master was condemned, "repented, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and

elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood, and cast down the pieces in the temple, and went” and what?—“ and *hanged himself.*” Here is the worst kind of repentance of all; in fact, I know not that I am justified in calling it repentance; it must be called remorse of conscience. But Judas did confess his sin, and then went and hanged himself. Oh! that dreadful, that terrible, that hideous confession of despair. Have you never seen it? If you never have, then bless God that you never were called to see such a sight. I have seen it once in my life, I pray God I may never see it again,—the repentance of the man who sees death staring him in the face, and who says, “I have sinned.” You tell him that Christ has died for sinners; and he answers, “There is no hope for me; I have cursed God to his face; I have defied him; my day of grace I know is past; my conscience is seared with a hot iron; I am dying, and I know I shall be lost!” Such a case as that happened long ago, you know, and is on record—the case of Francis Spira—the most dreadful case, perhaps, except that of Judas, which is upon record in the memory of man. Oh! my hearers, will any of you have such a repentance? If you do, it will be a beacon to all persons who sin in future; if you have such a repentance as that, it will be a warning to generations yet to come. In the life of Benjamin Keach—and he also was once of my predecessors—I find the case of a man who had been a professor of religion, but had departed from the profession, and had gone into awful sin. When he came to die, Keach, with many other friends, went to see him, but they could never stay with him above five minutes at a time; for he said, “Get ye gone; it is of no use your coming to me; I have sinned away the Holy Ghost; I am like Esau, I have sold my birthright, and though I seek it carefully with tears, I can never find it again.” And then he would repeat dreadful words, like these: ‘My mouth is filled with gravel stones, and I drink wormwood day and night. Tell me not tell me not of Christ! I know he is a Saviour, but I hate him and he hates me. I know I must die; I know I must perish!’ And then followed doleful cries, and hideous noises, such as none could bear. They returned again in his placid moments only to stir him up once more, and make him cry out in his despair, “I am lost ! I am lost ! It is of no use your telling me anything about it!” Ah! I there may be a man here who may have such a death as that; let me warn him, ere he come to it ; and may God the Holy Spirit grant that that man may be turned unto God, and made a true penitent, and then he need not have any more fear; for he who has had his sins washed away in a Saviour’s blood, need not have any remorse for his sins, for they are pardoned through the Redeemer.

The Repentance of the Saint.

JOB—“I have sinned.”—[Job 7:20](#)

VI. And now I come into daylight. I have been taking you through dark and dreary confessions; I shall detain you there no longer, but bring you out to the two good confessions which I have to read to you. The first is that of Job in 7th chap., at the 20th verse: “I have

sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?" This is the *repentance of the saint*. Job was a saint, but he sinned. This is the repentance of the man who is a child of God already, an acceptable repentance before God. But as I intend to dwell upon this in the evening, I shall now leave it, for fear of wearying you. David was a specimen of this kind of repentance, and I would have you carefully study his penitential psalms, the language of which is ever full of weeping humility and earnest penitence.

The Blessed Confession.

THE PRODIGAL—"I have sinned."—*Luke 15:18*.

VII. I come now to the last instance, which I shall mention; it is the case of the prodigal. In *Luke xv. 18*, we find the prodigal says: "Father I have sinned." Oh, here is a *blessed confession!* Here is that which proves a man to be a regenerate character—"Father, I have sinned." Let me picture the scene. There is the prodigal; he has run away from a good home and a kind father, and he has spent all his money with harlots, and now he has none left. He goes to his old companions, and asks them for relief. They laugh him to scorn. "Oh," says he, "you have drunk my wine many a day; I have always stood paymaster to you in all our revelries; will you not help me?" "Get you gone" they say; and he is turned out of doors. He goes to all his friends with whom he had associated, but no man gives him anything. At last a certain citizen of the country said,— "You want something to do, do you? Well go and feed my swine." The poor prodigal, the son of a rich landowner, who had a great fortune of his own, has to go out to feed swine; and he a Jew too!—the worst employment (to his mind,) to which he could be put. See him there, in squalid rags, feeding swine; and what are his wages? Why, so little, that he "would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine eat, but no man gave to him." Look, there he is, with the fellow commoners of the sty, in all his mire and filthiness. Suddenly a thought put there by the good Spirit, strikes his mind. "How is it," says he, "that in my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." Off he goes. He begs his way from town to town. Sometimes he gets a lift on a coach, perhaps, but at other times he goes trudging his way up barren hills and down desolate vales, all alone. And now at last he comes to the hill outside the village, and sees his father's house down below. There it is; the old poplar tree against it, and there are the stacks round which he and his brother used to run and play; and at the sight of the old homestead all the feelings and associations of his former life rush upon him, and tears run down his cheeks, and he is almost ready to run away again. He says "I wonder whether father's dead? I dare say mother broke her heart when I went away; I always was her favorite. And if they are either of them alive, they will never see me again; they will shut the door in

my face. What am I to do? I cannot go back, I am afraid to go forward.” And while he was thus deliberating, his father had been walking on the housetop, looking out for his son; and though he could not see his father, his father could see him. Well, the father comes down stairs with all his might, runs up to him, and whilst he is thinking of running away, his father’s arms are round his neck, and he falls-to kissing him, like a loving father indeed, and then the son begins,—“Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son,” and he was going to say, “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” But his father puts his hand on his mouth. “No more of that,” says he; “I forgive you all; you shall not say anything about being a hired servant—I will have none of that. Come along,” says he, “come in, poor prodigal. Ho!” says he to the servants, “bring hither the best robe, and put it on him, and put shoes on his poor bleeding feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.” Oh, what a precious reception for one of the chief of sinners! Good Matthew Henry says—“ His father saw him, there were eyes of mercy; he ran to meet him, there were legs of mercy; he put his arms round his neck, there were arms of mercy; he kissed him, there were kisses of mercy; he said to him—there were words of mercy,—Bring hither the best robe, there were deeds of mercy, wonders of mercy—all mercy. Oh, what a God of mercy he is.”

Now, prodigal, you do the same. Has God put it into your heart? There are many who have been running away a long time now. Does God say “return?” Oh, I bid you return, then, for as surely as ever thou dost return he will take thee in. There never was a poor sinner yet who came to Christ, whom Christ turned away. If he turns you away, you will be the first. Oh, if you could but try him! “Ah, sir, I am so black, so filthy, so vile.” Well come along with you—you cannot be blacker than the prodigal. Come to your Father’s house, and as surely as he is God he will keep his word—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”

Oh, if I might hear that some had come to Christ this morning, I would indeed bless God! I must tell here for the honor of God and Christ, one remarkable circumstance, and then I have done. You will remember that one morning I mentioned the case of an infidel who had been a scorner and scoffer, but who, through reading one of my printed sermons, had been brought to God’s house and then to God’s feet. Well, last Christmas day, the same infidel gathered together all his books, and went into the market-place at Norwich, and there made a public recantation of all his errors, and a profession of Christ, and then taking up all his books which he had written, and had in his house, on evil subjects, burned them in the sight of the people. I have blessed God for such a wonder of grace as that, and pray that there may be many more such, who, though they be born prodigal will yet return home, saying, “I have sinned.”

Preaching for the Poor

A Sermon

(No. 114)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 25, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“The poor have the gospel preached to them.”—[Matt. 11:5](#).

JOHN, the forerunner of Christ, had some followers who continued with him after Christ had come in the flesh, and openly manifested himself among the people. These disciples were in doubt as to whether Jesus was the Messiah or no. I believe that John himself had no doubt whatever upon the matter, for he had received positive revelations, and had given substantial testimonies on the subject. But in order to relieve their doubts, John said to his disciples, in some such words, “Go and ask him yourselves;” and, therefore, he dispatched them with this message, “Tell us whether thou art he that should come, or do we look for another?” Jesus Christ continuing his preaching for a while, said, “Stay and receive your answer;” and instead of giving them an affirmative reply, “I am that Messiah,” he said, “Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” As much as to say, “That is my answer; these things are my testimonies—on the one hand, that I come from God, and, on the other hand, that I am *the Messiah*.” You will see the truth and force of this reply, if you will observe that it was prophesied of the Messiah, that he should do the very things which Jesus at that moment was doing. It is said of Messias, in the 35th chap. of Isaiah, at the 5th and 6th verses, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” The Jews had forgotten this too much; they only looked for a Messiah who should be clothed with temporal grandeur and dignity, and they overlooked the teaching of Isaiah, that he should be “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” And besides that, you observe, they overlooked the miracles which it was prophesied should attend the coming of the glorious one, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus gave this as his answer—a practical demonstration of John’s problem, proving to an absolute certainty. But he not only referred to the miracles, he gave them a further proof—“The poor have the gospel preached to them.” This, also, was one evidence that he was Messias. For Isaiah, the great Messianic prophet, had said, “He shall preach the gospel unto the meek;” that is, the poor. And in that Jesus did so, it was proved that he was the man intended by Isaiah. Besides, Zechariah mentions the congregation of the poor who

attend on him, and therein evidently foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, the preacher to the poor.

I shall not, however, dwell upon these circumstances this morning; it must be apparent to every hearer, that here is sufficient proof that Jesus Christ is the person who had been foretold under the name of Shiloh, or Messiah. We all believe *that*, and, therefore, there is little need that I should try to prove what you have already received. I rather select my text this morning as one of the constant marks of the gospel in all ages and in every land. “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” This is to be its *semper idem* its constant stamp. And we believe, where the poor have not the gospel preached unto them, there is a departure from the dispensation of the gospel, the forsaking of this which was to be a fundamental trait and characteristic of the gospel dispensation: “The poor have the gospel preached to them.”

I find that these words will bear three translations; I shall, therefore, have three heads, which shall be composed of three translations of the text. The first is that of *the authorised version*: “The poor have the gospel preached to them;” it is also Tyndal’s version. The second is *the version of Crammer, and the version of Geneva*, which is the best, “The poor are evangelized,” that is to say, they not only hear the gospel, but they are influenced by it;—the poor receive it. The last is a translation of *some eminent writers*, and above all, of *Wyckliffe*, which amused me when I read it, although I believe it to be as correct as any of the others. Wyckliffe translates it—“pore men ben taken to prechyng of the gospel.” The verb may be equally well translated in the active as in the passive sense: “The poor have taken to the preaching of the gospel.” That is to be one of the marks of the gospel dispensation in all times.

I. First, then, THE AUTHORISED VERSION, “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” It was so in Christ’s day; it is to be so with Christ’s gospel to the end of time. Almost every impostor who has come into the world has aimed principally at the rich, and the mighty, and the respectable; very few impostors have found it to be worth their while to make it prominent in their preaching that they preach to the poor. They went before princes to promulgate their doctrines; they sought the halls of nobles where they might expatiate upon their pretended revelations. Few of them thought it worth their while to address themselves to those who have been most wickedly called “the swinish multitude,” and to speak to them the glorious things of the gospel of Christ. But it is one delightful mark of Christ’s dispensation, that he aims first at the poor. “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” It was wise in him to do so. If we would fire a building, it is best to light it at the basement; so our Saviour, when he would save a world, and convert men of all classes, and all ranks, begins at the lowest rank, that the fire may burn upwards, knowing right well that what was received by the poor, will ultimately by his grace be received by the rich also. Nevertheless, he chose this to be given to his disciples, and to be the mark of his gospel—“The

poor have the gospel preached to them.” Now, I have some things to say this morning, which I think are absolutely necessary, if the poor are to have the gospel preached unto them.

In the first place, let me say then, *that the gospel must be preached where the poor can come and hear it*. How can the poor have the gospel preached to them, if they cannot come and listen to it? And yet how many of our places of worship are there into which they cannot come, and into which, if they could come, they would only come as inferior creatures. They may sit in the back seats, but are not to be known and recognised as anything like other people. Hence the absolute necessity of having places of worship large enough to accommodate the multitude; and hence, moreover, the obligation to go out into the highways and hedges. If the poor are to have the gospel preached unto them, then we must take it where they can get it. If I wanted to preach to English people, it would be of no use for me to go and stand on one of the peaks of the Himalayas, and begin preaching; they could not hear me there. And it is of little avail to build a gorgeous structure for a fashionable congregation, and then to think of preaching to the poor; they cannot come any more than the Hottentots can make their journey from Africa and listen to me here. I should not expect them to come to such a place, nor will they willingly enter it. The gospel should be preached, then, where the poor will come; and if they will not come after it, then let it be taken to them. We should have places where there is accommodation for them, and where they are regarded and respected as much as any other rank and condition of men. It is with this view alone that I have laboured earnestly to be the means of building a large place of worship, because I feel that although the bulk of my congregation in New Park-street Chapel are poor, yet there are many poor who can by no possibility enter the doors, because we cannot find room for the multitudes to be received. You ask me why I do not preach in the street. I reply, I would do so, and am constantly doing so in every place except London, but here I cannot do it, since it would amount to an absolute breach of the peace, it being impossible to conceive what a multitude of people must necessarily be assembled. I trembled when I saw twelve thousand on the last occasion I preached in the open air; therefore I have thought it best, for the present at least, to desist, until happily there shall be fewer to follow me. Otherwise my heart is in the open air movement; I practise it everywhere else, and I pray God to give to our ministers zeal and earnestness, that they may take the gospel into the streets, highways and byeways, and compel the people to come in, that the house may be filled. Oh that God would give us this characteristic mark of his precious grace, that the poor might have the gospel preached unto them!

“But,” you reply, “there are plenty of churches and chapels to which they might come.” I answer, yes, but that is only one half of the matter. *The gospel must be preached attractively* before the poor will have the gospel preached unto them. Why, there is no attraction in the gospel to the great mass of our race, as it is currently preached. I confess that when I have a violent headache, and cannot sleep, I could almost wish for some droning minister to

preach to me; I feel certain I could go to sleep then, for I have heard some under the soporific influence of whose eloquence I could most comfortably snore. But it is not at all likely that the poor will ever go to hear such preachers as these. If they are preached to in fine terms—in grandiloquent language which they cannot lay hold of—the poor will not have the gospel preached to them, for they will not go to hear it. They must have something attractive to them; we must preach as Christ did; we must tell anecdotes, and stories, and parables, as he did; we must come down and make the gospel attractive. The reason why the old puritan preachers could get congregations was this—they did not give their hearers dry theology; they illustrated it; they had an anecdote from this and a quaint passage from that classic author; here a verse of poetry; here and there even a quip or pun—a thing which now-a-days is a sin above all sins, but which was constantly committed by these preachers, whom I have ever esteemed as the patterns of pulpit eloquence. Christ Jesus was an attractive preacher; he sought above all means to set the pearl in a frame of gold, that it might attract the attention of the people. He was not willing to place himself in a parish church, and preach to a large congregation of thirteen and a-half, like our good brethren in the city, but would preach in such a style that people felt they must go to hear him. Some of them gnashed their teeth in rage and left his presence in wrath, but the multitudes still thronged to him to hear and to be healed. It was no dull work to hear this King of preachers, he was too much in earnest to be dull, and too humane to be incomprehensible. I believe that until this is imitated, the poor will not have the gospel preached to them. There must be an interesting style adopted, to bring the people to hear. But if we adopt such a style they will call us clownish, vulgar, and so on. Blessed be God, we have long learnt that vulgarity is a very different thing from what some men suppose. We have been so taught, that we are willing to be even clowns for Christ's sake, and so long as we are seeing souls saved we are not likely to alter our course. During this last week I have seen, I believe, a score of persons who have been in the lowest ranks, the very meanest of sinners, the greatest of transgressors, who have, through preaching in this place, been restored and reclaimed. Do you think then I shall shear my locks to please the Philistine? Oh, no; by the grace of God, Samson knoweth where his strength lieth, and is not likely to do that to please any man or any set of men. Preaching must reach the popular ear; and to get at the people it must be interesting to them, and by the grace of God we hope it shall be.

But, in the next place, if the poor are to have the gospel preached unto them, *it must be preached simply*. It is a waste of time to preach Latin to you, is it not? To the multitude of people it is of no use delivering a discourse in Greek. Possibly five or six of the assembly might be mightily edified, and go away delighted; but what of that? The mass would retire unedified and uninstructed. You talk about the education of the people, don't you, and about the vast extent of English refinement? For the most part it is a dream. Ignorance is not buried yet. The language of one class of Englishmen is a dead language to another class;

and many a word which is very plain to many of us, is as hard and difficult a word to the multitude as if it had been culled out of Hindostani or Bengali. There are multitudes who cannot understand words composed of Latin, but must have the truth told them in round homely Saxon, if it is to reach their hearts. There is my friend the Rev. So-and-so, Doctor of Divinity; he is a great student, and whenever he finds a hard word in his books he tells it next Sunday to his congregation. He has a little intellectual circle, who think his preaching must be good, because they cannot understand it, and who think it proven that he must be an intelligent man because all the pews are empty. They believe he must be a very useful member of society; in fact, they compare him to Luther, and think he is a second Paul, because nobody will listen to him, seeing it is impossible to understand him. Well, we conceive of that good man that he may have a work to do, but we do not know what it is. There is another friend of ours, Mr. Cloudyton, who always preaches in such a style that if you should try to dissect the sermon for a week afterwards, you could by no possibility tell what he meant. If you could look at things from his point of view you might possibly discover something; but it does appear by his preaching as if he himself had lost his way in a fog, and were scattering a whole mass of mist about him everywhere. I suppose he goes so deep down into the subject that he stirs the mud at the bottom, and he cannot find his way up again. There are some such preachers, whom you cannot possibly understand. Now, we say, and say very boldly too, that while such preaching may be esteemed by some people to be good, we have no faith in it all. If ever the world is to be reclaimed, and if sinners are to be saved, we can see no likelihood in the world of its being done by such means. We think the word must be understood before it can really penetrate the conscience and the heart; and we would always be preaching such as men can understand, otherwise the poor will not “have the gospel preached to them.” Why did John Bunyan become the apostle of Bedfordshire, and Huntingdonshire, and round about? It was because John Bunyan, while he had a surpassing genius, would not condescend to cull his language from the garden of flowers, but he went into the hayfield and the meadow, and plucked up his language by the roots, and spoke out in words that the people used in their cottages. Why is it that God has blessed other men to the stirring of the people, to the bringing about of spiritual revivals, to the renewal of the power of godliness? We believe it has always been owing to this—under God’s Spirit—that they have adopted the phraseology of the people, and have not been ashamed to be despised because they talked as common people did.

But now we have something to say more important than this. We may preach, very simply too, and very attractively, and yet it may not be true that “the poor have the gospel preached to them,” for the poor may have something else preached to them beside the gospel. It is, then, highly important that we should each of us ask what the gospel is, and that when we think we know it we should not be ashamed to say, “This is the gospel, and I will preach it boldly, though all men should deny it.” Oh! I fear that there is such a thing as preaching

another gospel, “which is not another, but there be some that trouble us.” There is such a thing as preaching science and philosophy attractively, but not preaching the gospel. Mark, it is not preaching, but it is preaching the gospel that is the mark of Christ’s dispensation and of his truth. Let us take care to preach fully the depravity of man, let us dwell thoroughly upon his lost and ruined estate under the law, and his restoration under the gospel; let us preach of these three things, for, as a good brother said, “The gospel lies in three things, the Word of God only, the blood of Christ only, and the Holy Spirit only.” These three things make up the gospel. “The Bible; the Bible alone the religion of Protestants; the blood of Christ the only salvation from sin, the only means of the pardon of our guilt; and the Holy Spirit the only regenerator, the only converting power that will alone work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Without these three things there is no gospel. Let us take heed, then, for it is a serious matter, that when the people listen to us, it is *the gospel* that we preach, or else we may be as guilty as was Nero, the tyrant, who, when Rome was starving, sent his ships to Alexandria, where there was corn in plenty, not for wheat, for sand to scatter in the arena for his gladiators. Ah! there be some who seem to do so—scattering the floor of their sanctuary, not with the good corn of the kingdom, upon which the souls of God’s people may feed and grow thereby, but with sand of controversy, and of logic, which no child of God can ever receive to his soul’s profit. “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” Let us take heed that it is the gospel. Hear then, ye chief of sinners, the voice of Jesus. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” “Whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” “For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which is lost.”

And just one more hint on this point, namely, this,—it must be said of us, if we would keep true to Christ’s rule and apostolic practice, that “the poor have the gospel *preached* to them.” In these days there is a growing hatred of the pulpit. The pulpit has maintained its ground full many a year, but partially by its becoming inefficient, it is losing its high position. Through a timid abuse of it, instead of a strong stiff use of the pulpit, the world has come to despise it; and now most certainly we are not a priest-ridden people one-half so much as we are press-ridden people. By the press we are ridden indeed. Mercuries, Despatches, Journals, Gazettes and Magazines, are now the judges of pulpit eloquence and style. They thrust themselves into the censor’s seat, and censure those whose office it should rather be to censure them. For my own part, I cheerfully accord to all men the liberty of abusing me; but I must protest against the lying conduct of at least one editor, who has misquoted in order to pervert my meaning, and has done more; he has, to his eternal disgrace, manufactured a quotation from his own head, which never did occur in my works or words. The pulpit has become dishonoured; it is esteemed as being of very little worth and of no esteem. Ah! we must always maintain the dignity of the pulpit. I hold that it is the Thermopylae of

Christendom; it is here the battle must be fought between right and wrong—not so much with the pen, valuable as that is as an assistant, as with the living voice of earnest men, “contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.” In some churches the pulpit is put away; there is a prominent altar, but the pulpit is omitted. Now, the most prominent thing under the gospel dispensation is not the altar which belonged to the Jewish dispensation, but the pulpit. “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle;” that altar is Christ; but Christ has been pleased to exalt “the foolishness of preaching” to the most prominent position in his house of prayer. We must take heed that we always maintain preaching. It is this that God will bless; it is this that he has promised to crown with success. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” We must not expect to see great changes nor any great progress of the gospel until there is greater esteem for the pulpit—more said of it and thought of it. “Well,” some may reply, “you speak of the dignity of the pulpit; I take it, you lower it yourself, sir, by speaking in such a style to your hearers.” Ah! no doubt you think so. Some pulpits die of dignity. I take it, the greatest dignity in the world is the dignity of converts—that the glory of the pulpit is, if I may use such a metaphor, to have captives at its chariot-wheels, to see converts following it, and where there are such, and those from the very worst of men; there is a dignity in the pulpit beyond any dignity which a fine mouthing of words and a grand selection of fantastic language could ever give to it. “The poor have the gospel preached to them.”

II. now, the next translation is, THE TRANSLATION OF GENEVA, principally used by Calvin in his commentary; and it is also the translation of Thomas Crammer, whose translation, I believe, was at least in some degree moulded by the Genevan translation. He translates it thus:—“The poor receive the gospel.” The Genevan translation has it, “The poor receive the glad tidings of the gospel,” which is a tautology, since glad tidings mean the same thing as gospel. The Greek has it, “The poor are evangelised.” Now, what is the meaning of this word “evangelised?” They talk with a sneer in these days of evangelical drawing-rooms and evangelicals, and so on. It is one of the most singular sneers in the world; for to call a man an evangelical by way of joke, is the same as calling a man a gentleman by way of scoffing at him. To say a man is one of the gospellers by way of scorn, is like calling a man a king by way of contempt. It is an honourable, a great, a glorious title, and nothing is more honourable than to be ranked among the evangelicals. What is meant, then, by the people being evangelised? Old Master Burkitt, thinking that we should not easily understand the word, says, that as a man is said to be Italianised by living among the Italians, getting their manners and customs, and becoming a citizen of the state, so a man is evangelised when he lives where the gospel is preached and gets the manners and customs of those who profess it. Now, that is one meaning of the text. One of the proofs of our Saviour’s mission is not only that the poor hear the Word, but are influenced by it and are gospelized. Oh! how great a work it is to gospelize any man, and to gospelize a poor man. What does it mean? It means,

to make him *like* the gospel. Now, the gospel is holy, just, and true, and loving, and honest, and benevolent, and kind, and gracious. So, then, to gospelize a man is to make a rogue honest, to make a harlot modest, to make a profane man serious, to make a grasping man liberal, to make a covetous man benevolent, to make the drunken man sober, to make the untruthful man truthful, to make the unkind man loving, to make the hater the lover of his species, and, in a word, to gospelize a man is, in his outward character, to bring him into such a condition that he labours to carry out the command of Christ, "Love thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Gospelizing, furthermore, has something to do with an inner principle; gospelizing a man means saving him from hell and making him a heavenly character; it means blotting out his sins, writing a new name upon his heart—the new name of God. It means bringing him to know his election, to put his trust in Christ, to renounce his sins, and his good works too, and to trust solely and wholly upon Jesus Christ as his Redeemer. Oh! what a blessed thing it is to be gospelized! How many of you have been so gospelized? The Lord grant that the whole of us may feel the influence of the gospel. I contend for this, that to gospelize a man is the greatest miracle in the world. All the other miracles are wrapped up in this one. To gospelize a man, or, in other words, to convert him, is a greater work than to open the eyes of the blind; for is it not opening the eyes of the blind soul that he may see spiritual matters, and understand the things of heavenly wisdom, and is not a surgical operation easier than operation on the soul? Souls we cannot touch, although science and skill have been able to remove films and cataracts from the eyes. "The lame walk." Gospelizing a man is more than this. It is not only making a lame man walk, but it is making a dead man who could not walk in the right way walk in the right way ever afterwards. "The lepers are cleansed." Ah! but to cleanse a sinner is greater work than cleansing a leper. "The deaf hear." Yes, and to make a man who never listened to the voice of God hear the voice of his Maker, is a miracle greater than to make the deaf hear, or even to raise the dead. Great though that be, it is not a more stupendous effort of divine power than to save a soul, since men are naturally dead in sins, and must be quickened by divine grace if they are saved. To gospelize a man is the highest instance of divine might, and remains an unparalleled miracle, a miracle of miracles. "The poor are evangelized."

Beloved, there have been some very precious specimens of poor people who have come under the influence of the gospel. I think I appeal to the hearts of all of you who are now present, when I say there is nothing we more reverence and respect than the piety of the poor and needy. I had an engraving sent to me the other day which pleased me beyond measure. It was an engraving simply but exquisitely executed. It represented a poor girl in an upper room, with a lean-to roof. There was a post driven in the ground, on which was a piece of wood, standing on which were a candle and a Bible. She was on her knees at a chair, praying, wrestling with God. Everything in the room had on it the stamp of poverty. There was the mean coverlet to the old stump bedstead; there were the walls that had never been

papery, and perhaps scarcely whitewashed. It was an upper story to which she had climbed with aching knees, and where perhaps she had worked away till her fingers were worn to the bone to earn her bread at needlework. There it was that she was wrestling with God. Some would turn away and laugh at it; but it appeals to the best feelings of man, and moves the heart far more than does the fine engraving of the monarch on his knees in the grand assembly. We have had lately a most excellent volume, the *Life of Captain Hedley Vicars*; it is calculated to do great good, and I pray God to bless it; but I question whether the history of Captain Hedley Vicars will last as long in the public mind as the history of the Dairyman's Daughter, or the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain. The histories of those who have come from the ranks of the poor always lay hold of the Christian mind. Oh! we love piety anywhere; we bless God where coronets and grace go together; but if piety in any place do shine more brightly than anywhere else, it is in rags and poverty. When the poor woman in the almshouse takes her bread and her water, and blessed God for both—when the poor creature who has not where to lay his head, yet lifts his eye and says, "My Father will provide," it is then like the glow-worm in the damp leaves, a spark the more conspicuous for the blackness around it. Then religion gleams in its true brightness, and is seen in all its lustre. It is a mark of Christ's gospel that the poor are gospelized—that they can receive the gospel. True it is, the gospel affects all ranks, and is equally adapted to them all; but yet we say, "If one class be more prominent than another, we believe that in Holy Scripture the poor are most of all appealed to." "Oh!" say some very often, "the converts whom God has given to such a man are all from the lower ranks; they are all people with no sense; they are all uneducated people that hear such-and-such a person." Very well, if you say so; we might deny it if we pleased, but we do not know that we shall take the trouble, because we think it no disgrace whatever; we think it rather to be an honour that the poor are evangelized, and that they listen to the gospel from our lips. I have never thought it a disgrace at any time. When any have said, "Look, what a mass of uneducated people they are." Yes, I have thought, and blessed be God they are, for those are the very people that want the gospel most. If you saw a physician's door surrounded by a number of ladies of the sentimental school, who are sick about three times a week, and never were ill at all—if it were said he cured them, you would say, "No great wonder too, for there never was anything the matter with them." But if you heard of another man, that people with the worst diseases have come to him, and that God has made use of him, and his medicine has been the means of healing their diseases, you would then say, "There is something in it, for the people that want it most have received it." If, then, it be true that the poor will come to hear the gospel more than others, it is no disgrace to the gospel, it is an honour to it, that those who most want it do freely receive it.

III. And now I must close up by briefly dwelling on the last point. It was the third translation, WYCKLIFFE'S TRANSLATION. To give it you in old English—"Poor men are taking to the preaching of the gospel." "Ah!" say some, "they had better remain at home,

minding their ploughs or their blacksmith's hammer; they had better have kept on which their tinkering and tailoring, and not have turned preachers." But it is one of the honours of the gospel that poor men have taken to the preaching of it. There was a tinker once, and let the worldly-wise blush when they hear of it—there was a tinker once, a tinker of whom a great divine said he would give all his learning if he could preach like him. There was a tinker once, who never so much as brushed his back against the walls of a college, who wrote a "Pilgrim's Progress. Did ever a doctor in divinity write such a book. There was a pot-boy once—a boy who carried on his back the pewter pots for his mother, who kept the Old Bell. That man drove men mad, as the world had it, but led them to Christ, as we have it, all his life long, until, loaded with honours, he sank into his grave, with the good will of a multitude round about him, with an imperishable name written in the world's records, as well as in the records of the church. Did you ever hear of any mighty man, whose name stood in more esteem among God's people than the name of George Whitfield? And yet these were poor men, who, as Wyckliffe said, were taking to the preaching of the gospel. If you will read the life of Wyckliffe, you will find him saying there, that he believed that the Reformation in England was more promoted by the labours of the poor men whom he sent out from Lutterworth than by his own. He gathered round him a number of the poor people whom he instructed in the faith, and then he sent them two and two into every village, as Jesus did. They went into the market-place, and they gathered the people around; they opened the book and read a chapter, and then they left them a manuscript of it which for months and years after the people would assemble to read, and would remember the gospellers that had come to tell them the gospel of Christ. These men went from market-place to market-place, from town to town, and from village to village, and though their names are unknown to fame, they were the real reformers. You may talk of Cranmer, and Latimer, and Ridley; they did much, but the real reformers of the English nation were people whose names have perished from the annals of time, but are written in the records of eternity. God has blessed the poor man in preaching the truth. Far be it from me to depreciate learning and wisdom. We should not have had the Bible translated without learning and the more learning a man can have, if he be a sanctified man, the better; he has so many more talents to lay out in his Master's service; but it is not absolutely necessary for preaching of the Word. Rough, untamed, untaught energy, has done much in the church. A Boanerges has stood up in a village; he could not put three words together in grammatical English; but where the drowsy parson had for many a year lulled all his people into an unhallowed rest, this man started up, like the herdsman Amos, and brought about a great awakening. He began to preach in some cottage; people thronged around him, then a house was built, and his name is handed down to use as the Rev. So-and-so, but then he was known as Tom the ploughman, or John the tinker. God has made use of men whose origin was the most obscure, who seemed to have little, except the gifts of nature, which could be made use of in God's service; and we hold that

this is no disgrace, but on the contrary an honour, that poor men are taking to preaching the gospel.

I have to ask you this morning to help some poor men in preaching the gospel. We are constantly receiving letters from our poor brethren, and it is very seldom that we say “No,” to their appeals for assistance, but we must do so, unless our friends, more especially those who love the gospel, really will do something towards the maintenance of God’s faithful servants. I have, during the past year, preached many times for ministers on this ground, that they could not live unless some preached a sermon and made a collection for them. In some places the population was so small that they could not maintain their minister, and in others it was a new movement, and therefore they were unable to support him. Some of you subscribe to the Church Pastoral Aid Society. That is a very excellent society, but I never could see any good in it. There are many poor clergy in the Church of England who want assistance bad enough; but if you want to know the right way of keeping poor curates, I will tell you. Split a bishop up into fifty, and that will do it. If that could be done at once and speedily, there would be no need of Pastoral Aid Societies. You will say, perhaps, “Let such a thing be done in our denomination.” I answer that we have no bishops with whom such a thing could be done. I believe there is not to be found one minister in the whole Baptist denomination whose salary has ever exceeded £600, and there are only three, I believe, who receive as much as that, of which I am not one, and these three men are in such a position that their demands are great, and they have not one penny too much, while the great mass of our denomination receive £20, £30, £40, £50, £60, and so on, but below £100. The sum collected to-day will be given to those whose incomes are below £80, and whose needs are great.

And now, beloved, I have opened my mouth for the dumb, and pleaded the cause of the poor, let me end by entreating the poor of the flock to consider the poor man’s Christ; let me urge them to give Him their thoughts, and may the Lord enable them to yield him their hearts. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

May God bless the high and low, the rich and poor; yea, all of you, for his name’s sake.

Why Are Men Saved?

A Sermon

(No. 115)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 1, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Nevertheless he saved them for his name’s sake.”—[Psalm 106:8](#).

IN LOOKING upon the works of God in creation, there are two questions which at once occur to the thoughtful mind, and which must be answered before we can procure a clue to the philosophy and science of creation itself. The first one is the question of authorship: Who made all these things? And the next question is that of design: For what purpose were all these things created? The first question, “Who made all these things?” is one which is easily answered by a man who has a honest conscience and a sane mind, for when he lifts eyes up yonder to read the stars, he will see those stars spell out in golden letters this word—*God*; and when he looks below upon the waves, if his ears are honestly opened, he will hear each wave proclaiming, *God*. If he looks to the summits of the mountains, they will not speak, but with a dignified answer of silence they seem to say,

“The hand that made us is Divine.”

If we listen to the rippling of the freshet at the mountain side, to the tumbling of the avalanche, to the lowing of the cattle, to the singing of the birds, to every voice and sound of nature, we shall hear this answer to the question, “God is our maker; he hath made us, and not we ourselves.”

The next question, as to design—Why were these things made?—is not so easy to answer, apart from Scripture; but when we look at Scripture we discover this fact—that as the answer to the first question is God, so the answer to the second question is the same. Why were these things made? The answer is, for God’s glory, for his honor, and for his pleasure. No other answer can be consistent with reason. Whatever other replies men may propound, no other can be really sound. If they will for one moment consider that there was a time when God had no creatures—when he dwelt alone, the mighty maker of ages, glorious in an uncreated solitude, divine in his eternal loneliness—“I am and there is none beside me”—can any one answer this question—Why did God make creatures to exist?—in any other way than by answering it thus: “He made them for his own pleasure and for his own glory.” You may say he made them for his creatures; but we answer, there were then no creatures to make them for. We admit that the answer may be a sound one *now*. God makes the harvest for his creatures; he hangs the sun in the firmament to bless his creatures with light and sunshine; he bids the moon walk her course by night, to cheer the darkness of his creatures upon earth. But the first answer, going back to the origin of all things, can be

nothing else than this: “For his pleasure they are and were created.” “He made all things for himself and by himself.”

Now, this which holds good in the works of creation, holds equally good in the works of salvation. Lift up your eyes on high; higher than those stars which glimmer on the floor of heaven; look up, where spirits in white, clearer than light, shine like stars in their magnificence; look there, where the redeemed with their choral symphonies “circle the throne of God rejoicing,” and put this question: “Who saved those glorified beings, and for what purpose were they saved.” We tell you that the same answer must be given as we have previously given to the former question—“*He saved them—he saved them for his name’s sake.*” The text is an answer to the two great questions concerning salvation: Who saved men, and why are they saved? “He saved them for his name’s sake.”

Into this subject I shall endeavour to look this morning. May God make it profitable to each of us, and may we be found among the number who shall be saved “for his name’s sake.” Treating the text verbally—and that is the way most will understand—here are four things. First, *a glorious Saviour*—“*He saved them;*” secondly, *a favored people*—“*He saved them;*” thirdly *a divine reason why he saved them*—“for his names sake;” and fourthly, *an obstruction conquered*, in the word “nevertheless,” implying that there was some difficulty that was removed. “Nevertheless he saved them for his name’s sake.” A Saviour; the saved; the reason; the obstruction removed.

I. First, then, here is A GLORIOUS SAVIOUR—“*He saved them.*” Who is to be understood by that pronoun “he?” Possibly man of my hearers may answer, “Why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men.” Right, my friends; but not all the truth. Jesus Christ is the Saviour; but not more so than God the Father, or God the Holy Ghost. Some persons who are ignorant of the system of divine truth think of God the Father as being a great Being full of wrath, and anger, and justice, but having no love, they think of God the Spirit perhaps as a mere influence proceeding from the Father and the Son. Now, nothing can be more incorrect than such opinions. It is true the Son redeems me, but then the Father gave the Son to die for me, and the Father chose me in the everlasting election of his grace. The Father blots out my sin; the Father accepts me and adopts me into his family through Christ. The Son could not save without the Father any more than the Father without the Son; and as for the Holy Spirit, if the Son redeems, know ye not that the Holy Ghost regenerates? It is he that makes us new creatures in Christ, who begets us again unto a lively hope, who purifies our soul, who sanctifies our spirit, and who, at last, presents us spotless and faultless before the throne of the Most High, accepted in the beloved. When thou sayest, “Saviour,” remember there is a Trinity in that word—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, this Saviour being three persons under one name. Thou canst not be saved by the Son without the Father, nor by the Father without the Son, nor by Father and Son without the Spirit. But

as they are one in creation, so are they one in salvation, working together in one God for our salvation, and unto that God be glory everlasting, world without end, Amen.

But, note here, how this Divine being claims salvation wholly to himself. “Nevertheless HE saved them.” But, Moses, where art thou? Didst not thou save them, Moses? Thou didst stretch the rod over the sea, and it clave in halves; thou didst lift up thy prayer to heaven, and the frogs came, and the flies swarmed, and the water was turned into blood, and the hail smote the land of Egypt. Was not thou their Saviour, Moses? And thou Aaron, thou didst offer the bullocks which God accepted; thou didst lead them, with Moses, through the wilderness. Wast not thou their Saviour? They answer, “Nay, we were the instruments, but *he* saved them. God made use of us, but unto his name be all the glory, and none unto ourselves.” But, Israel, thou wast a strong and mighty people; didst not thou save thyself? Perhaps it was by thine own holiness that the Red Sea was dried up; perhaps the parted floods were frightened at the piety of the saints that stood upon their margin; perhaps it was Israel that delivered itself. Nay, nay, saith God’s Word; *he* saved them; they did not save themselves, nor did their fellow-men redeem them. And yet, mark you, there are some who dispute this point, who think that men save themselves, or, at least, that priests and preachers can help to do it. We say that the preacher, under God, may be the instrument of arresting man’s attention, of warning him and arousing him; but the preacher is nothing; God is everything. The most mighty eloquence that ever distilled from the lips of seraphic preacher is nothing apart from God’s Holy Spirit. Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas, are anything; God gave the increase and God must have all the glory. There are some we meet with here and there who say, “I am Mr. So-and-so’s convert; I am a convert of the Rev. Dr. this or that.” Well, if you are, sir, I cannot give you much hope of heaven. Only God’s converts go there; not proselytes of man, but the redeemed of the Lord. Oh, it is very little to convert a man to our own opinions; it is something to be the means of converting him to the Lord our God. I had a letter some time ago from a good Baptist minister in Ireland, who very much wanted me to cover over to Ireland, as he said, to represent the Baptist interest, because it was low there, and perhaps it might lead the people to think a little more of Baptists. I told him I would not go across the street merely to do that, much less would I cross the Irish Channel. I should not think of going to Ireland for that; but if I might go there to make Christians, under God, and be the means of bringing men to Christ, I would leave it to them what they should be afterwards, and trust to God’s Holy Spirit to direct and guide them as to what denomination they should consider nearest akin to God’s truth. Brethren, I might make all of you Baptists, perhaps, and yet you would be none the better for it; I might convert you all in that way, but such a conversion would be that you would be washed to greater stains, converted into hypocrites, and not into saints. I have seen something of wholesale conversion. Great revivalists have rise up; they have preached thundering sermons that have made men’s knees knock together. “What a wonderful man!”

people have said. "He has converted so many under one sermon." But look for his converts in a month, and where will they be? You will see some of them in the alehouse, you will hear others of them swear, you will find many of them rogues, and cheats, because they were not God's converts, but only man's. Brethren, if the work be done at all, it must be done of God, for if God do not convert there is nothing done that shall last, and nothing that shall be of any avail for eternity.

But some reply, "Well, sir, but men convert themselves." Yes, they do, and a fine conversion it is. Very frequently they convert themselves. But then that which man did, man undoes. He who converts himself one day, unconverts himself the next; he tieth a knot which his own fingers can loosen. Remember this—you may convert yourselves a dozen times over, but "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and "cannot see the kingdom of God." It is only "that which is born of the Spirit" that "is Spirit," and is therefore able to be gathered at last into the spirit-realm, where only spiritual things can be found before the throne of the Most High. We must reserve this prerogative wholly to God. If any man state that God is not Creator, we call him infidel; if any man entrench upon this doctrine, that God is the absolute Maker of all things, we hiss him down in a moment; but he is an infidel of the worst kind, because more specious, who puts God out of the mercy throne, instead of putting him out of the creation throne, and who tells men that they may convert themselves, whereas God doth it all. "He" only, the great Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—"he saved them for his name's sake.

Thus have I endeavoured to set out clearly the first truth of the divine and glorious Saviour.

II. Now, secondly, THE FAVORED PEOPLE—"He saved *them*." Who are they? You will reply, "They were the most respectable people that could be found in the world; they were a very prayerful, loving, holy, and deserving people; and, therefore, because they were good he saved them." Very well, that is your opinion, I will tell you what Moses says,— "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitudes of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless he saved them." Look at the 7th verse, and you will have their character. In the first place, they were a stupid people—"Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt." In the next place, they were an ungrateful people—"they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies." In the third place, they were a provoking people—"they provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Ah, these are the people whom free grace saves, these are the men and these the woman whom the God of all grace condescends to take to his bosom and to make anew.

Note, first, *that they were a stupid people*. God sends his gospel not always to the wise and prudent, but unto fools;

"He takes the fool and makes him know
The wonders of his dying love."

Do not suppose, my hearer, because you are very unlettered and can scarcely read—do not imagine, because you have always been brought up in extreme ignorance, and have scarcely learnt to spell your name, that therefore you cannot be saved. God's grace can save you, and then enlighten you. A brother minister once told me a story of a man who was known in a certain village as a simpleton, and was always considered to be soft in the head; no one thought he could ever understand anything. But one day he came to hear the gospel preached. He had been a drunken fellow, having wit enough to be wicked, which is a very common kind of wit. The Lord was pleased to bless the word to his soul, so that he became a changed character; and what was the marvel of all was, his religion gave him a something which began to develop his latent faculties. He found he had a something to live for, and he began to try what he could do. In the first place he wanted to read his Bible, that he might read his Saviour's name; and after much hammering and spelling away, at last he was able to read a chapter. Then he was asked to pray at a prayer-meeting; here was an exercise of his vocal powers. Five or six words made up his prayer, and down he sat abashed. But by continually praying in his own family at home, he came to pray like the rest of the brethren, and he went on till he became a preacher, and, singularly enough, he had a fluency—a depth of understanding and a power of thought, such as are seldom found among ministers who only occasionally occupy pulpits. Strange it was, that grace should even tend to develop his natural powers, giving him an object, setting him devoutly and firmly upon it, and so bringing out all his resources that they were fully shown. Ah, ignorant ones, ye need not despair. He saved them; not for *their* sakes—there was nothing in them why they should be saved. He saved them, not for their wisdom's sake; but, ignorant though they were, understanding not the meaning of his miracles, "he saved them for his name's sake."

Note, again, *they were a very ungrateful people*, and yet he saved them. He delivered them times without number, and worked for them mighty miracles; but they still rebelled. Ah, that is like you, my hearer. You have had many deliverances from the borders of the grave; God has given you house and food day after day, and provided for you, and kept you to this hour; but how ungrateful you have been! As Isaiah said, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but my people doth not know, Israel doth not consider." How many there are of this character, who have favors from God, the history of which they could not give in a year; but yet what have they ever done for him? They would not keep a horse that did not work for them, nor as much as a dog that would not notice them. But here is God; he has kept them day by day, and they have done a great deal against him, but they have done nothing for him. He has put the bread into their very mouths, nurtured them, and sustained their strength, and they have spent their strength in defying him, in cursing his name and breaking his Sabbath. "Nevertheless he saved them." Some of this sort have been saved. I hope I have some here now who will be saved by conquering grace, made new men by the mighty power of God's Spirit. "Nevertheless he saved them." When there was

nothing to recommend them, but every reason why they should be cast away for their ingratitude, “Nevertheless he saved them.”

And note, once more, *they were a provoking people*—“They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.” Ah! how many people there are in this world that are a provoking people to God! If God were like man, who among us would be here to-day? If we are provoked once or twice, up goes the hand. With some men their passion stirs at the very first offence; others, who are somewhat more placid will bear offence after offence, till at last they say, “there is an end to everything, and I can bear that no longer; you must stay it, or else I must stay you!” Ah! if God had that temper, where should we be? Well might he say, “My thoughts are not as your thoughts; I am God, I change not, or else ye sons of Jacob had been consumed.” They were a provoking people, “nevertheless he saved them.” Have you provoked him? Take heart, if you repent, God has promised to save you; and what is more, he may this morning give you repentance, and even give you remission of sins, for he saves provoking people for his name’s sake. I hear one of my hearers say,—“Well, sir, that is encouraging sin with a vengeance!” Is it, indeed, sir! Why? “Because you are talking to the very worst of men, and you are saying that they may yet be saved.” Pray, sirs, when I spoke to the worst of men, did I speak to *you* or not? You say, “No; I am one of the most respectable and best of men.” Well then, sir, I have no need to preach to you, for you think you do not need mercy. “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” But these poor people, whom you say I am encouraging in sin, need to be spoken to. I will leave you. Good morning to you! You keep to your own gospel, and I wonder whether you will find your way to heaven by it. Nay, I do not wonder, I know you will not, unless you are brought as a poor sinner to take Christ at his word, and be saved for his name’s sake. But I say farewell to you, and I will keep on in my course. But why did you say I encourage men in sin? I encourage them to turn from it. I did not say he saved the provoking people, and then let them still provoke him as they had done before; I did not say he saved the wicked people, and then let them sin as they did before. But you know the meaning of the word “saved;” I explained it the other morning. The word “saved” does not mean merely taking men to heaven; it means more—it means saving them from their sin; it means giving them a new heart, new spirits, new lives; it means making them into new men. Is there anything licentious in saying that Christ takes the worst of men to make them into saints? If there be, I cannot see it. I only wish he would take the worst of this congregation and make them into the saints of the living God, and then there would be far less licentiousness. Sinner, I comfort thee; not in thy sin, but in thy repentance. Sinner, the saints of heaven were once as bad as thou hast been. Art thou a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean person? “Such were some of them; but they have been washed—but they have been sanctified.” Is thy robe black? Ask them whether their robes were ever black, they would not have wanted washing, “We have washed

our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Then sinner, if they were black, and were saved, why not thyself?

“Are not his mercies rich and free?

Then say, my soul, why not for thee?

Our Jesus died upon the tree,

Then why, my soul, why not for thee?”

Take heart, penitents, God will have mercy on you. “Nevertheless, he saved them for his name’s sake.”

III. Now we come to the third point—THE REASON OF SALVATION: “He saved them for his name’s sake.” There is no other reason why God should save a man, but for his name’s sake; there is nothing in a sinner which can entitle him to salvation, or recommend him to mercy; it must be God’s own heart which must dictate the motive why men are to be saved. One person says, “God will save me, because I am so upright.” Sir, he will do no such thing. Says another, “God will save me because I am so talented.” Sir, he will not. *Your talent!* Why thou drivelling, self-conceited idiot, thy talent is nothing compared with that of the angel that once stood before the throne, and sinned, and who now is cast into the bottomless pit for ever! If he would save men for their talent, he would have saved Satan; for he had talents enough. As for thy morality and goodness, it is but filthy rags, and he will never save thee for aught thou doest. None of us would ever be saved, if God expected anything of us: we must be saved purely and solely for reasons connected with himself, and lying in his own bosom. Blessed be his name, he saves us for “his name’s sake.” What does that mean? I think it means this: the name of God is his person, his attributes, and his nature. For his nature’s sake, for his very attribute’s sake, he saved men; and, perhaps, we may include this also, “My name is in him”—that is, in Christ; he saves us for the sake of Christ, who is the name of God. And what does that mean? I think it means this:

He saved them, first, that he might manifest his nature. God was all love, and he wanted to manifest it; he did show it when he made the sun, the moon, and the stars, and scattered flowers o’er the green and laughing earth. He did show his love when he made the air balmy to the body, and the sunshine cheering to the eye. He gives us warmth even in winter, by the clothing and by the fuel which he has stored in the bowels of the earth; but he wanted to reveal himself still more. “How can I show them that I love them with all my infinite heart? I will give my Son to die to save the very worst of them, and so I will manifest my nature.” And God has done it, he has manifested his power, his justice, his love, his faithfulness, and his truth; he has manifested his whole self on the great platform of salvation. It was, so to speak, the balcony on which God stepped to show himself to man—the balcony of salvation—here it is he manifests himself, by saving men’s souls.

He did it, again, to vindicate his name. Some say God is cruel; they wickedly call him tyrant. “Ah!” says God, “but I will save the worst of sinners, and vindicate my name; I will

blot out the stigma; I will remove the slur: they shall not be able to say that, unless they be filthy liars, for I will be abundantly merciful. I will take away this stain, and they shall see that my great name is a name of love.” And said he, again, “I will do this for my name’s sake; that is, to make these people love my name; but if I take the worst of men, oh, how they will love me! If I go and take some of the offscouring of the earth, and make them my children, oh, how they will love me! Then they will cleave to my name; they will think it more sweet than music; it will be more precious to them than the spikenard of the Eastern merchants; they will value it as gold, yea, as much fine gold. The man who loves me best, is the man who has most sins forgiven: he owes much, therefore he will love much.” This is the reason why God often selects the worst of men to make them his. Saith an old writer, “All the carvings of heaven were made out of knots; the temple of God, the king of heaven, is a cedar one, but the cedars were all knotty trees before he cut them down.” He chose the worst, that he might display his workmanship and his skill, to make unto himself a name; as it is written, “It shall be unto me for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Now, dear hearers, of whatever class you are, here is something I have to offer well worthy of your consideration, namely—that if saved, we are saved for the sake of God, for his name’s sake, and not for our own.

Now this puts all men on a level with regard to salvation. Suppose that in coming into this garden, the rule had been that every one should have made mention of my name as the key of admittance; the law is, that no man is to be admitted for his rank or title, but only by the use of a certain name. Up comes a lord; he makes use of the name and comes in; up comes a beggar, all in patches; he makes use of the name—the law says it is only the use of the name that will admit you—he makes use of it and he enters, for there is no distinction. So, my lady, if you come, with all your morality, you must make use of His name: if you come, poor filthy inhabitant of a cellar or a garret, and make use of His name, the doors will fly wide open, for there is salvation for every one who makes mention of the name of Christ, and for none other. This pulls down the pride of the moralist, abases the self exaltation of the self righteous, and puts us all, as guilty sinners, on an equal footing before God, to receive mercy at his hands, “For his name’s sake,” and for that reason alone.

IV. I have detained you too long; let me close by noticing the OBSTACLES REMOVED in the word “nevertheless.” I shall do that in somewhat of an interesting form, by way of parable.

Once on a time, Mercy sat upon her snow-white throne, surrounded by the troops of love. A sinner was brought before her, whom Mercy designed to save. The herald blew the trumpet, and after three blasts thereof, with a loud voice, he said—“O heaven and earth, and hell, I summon you this day to come before the throne of Mercy, to tell why this sinner should not be saved.” There stood the sinner, trembling with fear; he knew that there were multitudes of opponents, who would press into the hall of Mercy, and with eyes full of wrath

would say, "He must not, and he shall not escape, he must be lost!" The trumpet was blown, and Mercy sat placidly on her throne, until there stepped in one with a fiery countenance; his head was covered with light; he spoke with a voice like thunder, and out of his eyes flashed lightning! "Who art thou?" said Mercy. He replied, "I am Law; the law of God." "And what hast thou to say?" "I have this to say," and he lifted up a stony tablet, written on both sides; "these ten commands this wretch has broken. My demand is blood; for it is written, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' Die he, or justice must." The wretch trembles, his knees knock together, the marrow of his bones melts within him, as if they were ice dissolved by fire, and he shakes with very fright. Already he thought he saw the thunderbolt launched at him, he saw the lightning penetrate into his soul, hell yawned before him in imagination, and he thought himself cast away for ever. But Mercy smiled, and said, "Law, I will answer thee. This wretch deserves to die; justice demands that he should perish—I award thee thy claim." And oh! how the sinner trembles. "But there is one yonder who has come with me to-day, my king, my Lord; his name is Jesus; he will tell you how the debt can be paid, and the sinner can go free." Then Jesus spake, and said, "O Mercy, I will do thy bidding. Take me Law; put me in a garden; make me sweat drops of blood; then nail me to a tree; scourge my back before you put me to death; hang me on the cross; let blood run from my hands and feet; let me descend into the grave; let me pay all the sinner oweth; I will die in his stead." And the Law went out and scourged the Saviour, nailed him to the cross, and coming back with his face all bright with satisfaction, stood again at the throne of Mercy, and Mercy said, "Law, what hast thou now to say?" "Nothing," said he, "fair angel, nothing." "What! not one of these commands against him?" "No, not one. Jesus, his substitute, has kept them all—has paid the penalty for his disobedience; and now, instead of his condemnation, I demand as a debt of justice that he be acquitted." "Stand thou here," said Mercy, "sit on my throne; I and thou together will now send forth another summons." The trumpet rang again. "Come hither, all ye who have aught to say against this sinner, why he should not be acquitted;" and up comes another—one who often troubled the sinner, one who had a voice not so loud as that of the Law, but still piercing and thrilling—a voice whose whispers were like the cuttings of a dagger. "Who art thou?" says Mercy. "I am Conscience; this sinner must be punished; he has done so much against the law of God that he must be punished; I demand it; and I will give him no rest till he is punished, nor even then, for I will follow him even to the grave, and persecute him after death with pangs unutterable." "Nay," said Mercy, "hear me," and while he paused for a moment, she took a bunch of hyssop and sprinkled Conscience with the blood, saying, "Hear me, Conscience, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin;' Now hast thou ought to say,?" "No," said Conscience, "nothing."

'Covered is his unrighteousness;
From condemnation he is free.'

Henceforth I will not grieve him; I will be a good conscience unto him, through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." The trumpet rang a third time, and growling from the innermost vaults, up there came a grim black fiend, with hate in his eyes, and hellish majesty on his brows. He is asked, "Hast thou anything against that sinner?" "Yes," said he, "I have; he has made a league with hell, and a covenant with the grave, and here it is signed with his own hand. He asked God to destroy his soul in a drunken fit, and vowed he would never turn to God; see, here is his covenant with hell!" "Let us look at it," said Mercy; and it was handed up, whilst the grim fiend looked at the sinner, and pierced him through with his black looks. "Ah! but," said Mercy, "this man had no right to sign the deed; a man must not sign away another's property. This man was bought and paid for long beforehand; he is not his own; the covenant with death is disannulled, and the league with hell is rent in pieces. Go thy way Satan," "Nay," said he, howling again, "I have something else to say: that man was always my friend; he listened ever to my insinuations; he scoffed at the gospel; he scorned the majesty of heaven; is he to be pardoned, whilst I repair to my hellish den, for ever to bear the penalty of guilt?" Said Mercy, "Avaunt, thou fiend; these things he did in the days of his unregeneracy; but this word 'nevertheless' blots them out. Go thou to thy hell; take this for another lash upon thyself—the sinner shall be pardoned, but thou—never, treacherous fiend!" And then Mercy, smilingly turning to the sinner, said, "Sinner, the trumpet must be blown for the last time!" Again it was blown, and no one answered. Then stood the sinner up, and Mercy said, "Sinner ask thyself the question—ask thou of heaven, of earth, of hell—whether any can condemn thee?" And the sinner stood up, and with a bold loud voice said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And he looked into hell, and Satan lay there, biting his iron bonds; and he looked on earth, and earth was silent; and in the majesty of faith the sinner did even climb to heaven itself, and he said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God?" And the answer came, "No; he justifieth." "Christ?" Sweetly it was whispered, "No; he died." Then turning round, the sinner joyfully exclaimed, "Who shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And the once condemned sinner came back to Mercy; prostrate at her feet he lay, and vowed henceforth to be hers for ever, if she would keep him to the end, and make him what she would desire him to be. Then no longer did the trumpet ring, but angels rejoiced, and heaven was glad, for the sinner was saved.

Thus, you see, I have what is called, dramatized the thing; but I don't care what it is called; it is a way of arresting the ear, when nothing else will. "Nevertheless;" there is the obstruction taken away! Sinner, whatever be the "nevertheless," it shall never the less abate the Saviour's love; not the less shall it ever make it, but it shall remain the same.

"Come, guilty soul, and flee away
To Christ and heal thy wounds;
This is the glorious gospel-day,

Wherein free grace abounds.

Come to Jesus, sinner, come.”

On thy knee weep out a sorrowful confession; look to his cross, and see the substitute; believe, and live. Ye almost demons, ye that have gone farthest in sin, now, Jesus says, “If you know your need of me, turn unto me, and I will have mercy upon you: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Secret Sins

A Sermon

(No. 116)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 8, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Cleanse thou me from secret faults.—[Psalm 19:12](#).

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS arises partly from pride but mainly from ignorance of God’s law. It is because men know little or nothing concerning the terrible character of the divine law, that they foolishly imagine themselves to be righteous. They are not aware of the deep spirituality, and the stern severity of the law, or they would have other and wiser notions. Once let them know how strictly the law deals with the thoughts, how it brings itself to bear upon every emotion of the inner man, and there is not one creature beneath God’s heaven who would dare to think himself righteous in God’s sight in virtue of his own deeds and thoughts. Only let the law be revealed to a man; let him know how strict the law is, and how infinitely just, and his self-righteousness will shrivel into nothing—it will become a filthy rag in his sight, whereas before he thought it to be a goodly garment.

Now, David, having seen God’s law, and having praised it in this Psalm, which I have read in your hearing, he is brought, by reflecting on its excellency, to utter this thought, “Who can understand his errors?” and then to offer this prayer, “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

In the Lateran Council of the Church of Rome, a decree was passed that every true believer must confess his sins, all of them, once a year to the priest, and they affixed to it this declaration, that there is no hope of pardon but in complying with that decree. What can equal the absurdity of such a decree as that? Do they suppose that they can tell their sins as easily as they can count their fingers? Why, if we could receive pardon for all our sins by telling every sin we have committed in one hour, there is not one of us who would be able to enter heaven, since, besides the sins that are known to us and that we may be able to confess, there are a vast mass of sins, which are as truly sins as those which we do observe, but which are secret, and come not beneath our eye. Oh! if we had eyes like those of God, we should think very differently of ourselves. The sins that we see and confess are but like the farmer’s small samples which he brings to market, when he has left his granary full at home. We have but a very few sins which we can observe and detect, compared with those which are hidden to ourselves and unseen by our fellow creatures. I doubt not it is true of all of us who are here, that in every hour of our existence in which we are active, we commit tens of thousands of unholinesses for which conscience has never reproved us, because we have never seen them to be wrong, seeing we have not studied God’s laws as we ought to

have done. Now, be it known to us all that sin is sin, whether we see it or not—that a sin secret to us is a sin as truly as if we knew it to be a sin, though not so great a sin in the sight of God as if it had been committed presumptuously, seeing that it lacks the aggravation of willfulness. Let all of us who know our sins, offer this prayer after all our confessions: “Lord, I have confessed as many as I know, but I must add an etcetera after them, and say, ‘Cleanse thou me from secret faults.’”

That, however, will not be the pith of my sermon this morning. I am going after a certain class of men who have sins not unknown to themselves, but secret to their fellow creatures. Every now and then we turn up a fair stone which lies upon the green sward of the professing church, surrounded with the verdure of apparent goodness, and to our astonishment we find beneath it all kinds of filthy insects and loathsome reptiles, and in our disgust as such hypocrisy, we are driven to exclaim, “All men are liars; there are none in whom we can put any trust at all.” It is not fair to say so of all; but really, the discoveries which are made of the insincerity of our fellow-creatures are enough to make us despise our kind, because they can go so far in appearances, and yet have so little soundness of heart. To you, sirs, who sin secretly, and yet make a profession; you break God’s covenants in the dark and wear a mask of goodness in the light—to you, sirs, who shut the doors and commit wickedness in secret—to you I shall speak this morning. O may God also be pleased to speak to you, and make you pray this prayer: “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

I shall endeavour to urge upon all pretenders present to give up, to renounce, to detest, to hate, to abhor all their secret sins. And, first, I shall endeavour to show *the folly of secret sins*; secondly, *the misery of secret sins*; thirdly, *the guilt of secret sins*; fourthly, *the danger of secret sins*; and then I shall try to apply some words by way of remedy, that we may all of us be enabled to avoid secret sins.

I. First, then, THE FOLLY OF SECRET SINS.

Pretender, thou art fair to look upon; thy conduct outwardly upright, amiable, liberal, generous and Christian; but thou dost indulge in some sin which the eye of man has not yet detected. Perhaps it is private drunkenness. Thou dost revile the drunkard when he staggers through the street; but thou canst thyself indulge in the same habit in private. It may be some other lust or vice; it is not for me just now to mention what it is. But, pretender, we say unto thee, thou art a fool to think of harbouring a secret sin; and thou art a fool for this one reason, that thy sin is not a secret sin; *it is known*, and shall one day be revealed; perhaps very soon. Thy sin is not a secret; the eye of God hath seen it; thou hast sinned before his face. Thou hast shut-to the door, and drawn the curtains, and kept out the eye of the sun, but God’s eye pierceth through the darkness; the brick walls which surrounded thee were as transparent as glass to the eye of the Almighty; the darkness which did gird thee was as bright as the summer’s noon to the eye of him who beholdeth all things. Knowest thou not, O man, that “all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have

to do?” As the priest ran his knife into the entrails of his victim, discovered the heart and liver, and what else did lie within, so art thou, O man, seen by God, cut open by the Almighty; thou hast no secret chamber where thou canst hide thyself; thou hast no dark cellar where thou canst conceal thy soul. Dig deep, ay, deep as hell, but thou canst not find earth enough upon the globe to cover thy sin; if thou shouldst heap the mountains on its grave, those mountains would tell the tale of what was buried in their bowels. If thou couldst cast thy sin into the sea, a thousand babbling waves would tell the secret out. There is no hiding it from God. Thy sin is photographed in high heaven; the deed when it was done was photographed upon the sky, and there it shall remain, and thou shalt see thyself one day revealed to the gazing eyes of all men, a hypocrite, a pretender, who didst sin in fancied secret, observed in all thine acts by the all-seeing Jehovah. O what fools men are, to think they can do anything in secret. This world is like the glass hives wherein bees sometimes work: we look down upon them, and we see all the operations of the little creatures. So God looketh down and seeth all. Our eyes are weak; we cannot look through the darkness; but his eye, like an orb of fire, penetrateth the blackness; and readeth the thoughts of man, and seeth his acts when he thinks himself most concealed. Oh; it were a thought enough to curb us from all sin, if it were truly applied to us—“Thou, God, seest me!” Stop thief! Drop thou that which thou hast taken to thyself. God seeth thee! No eye of detection on earth hath discovered thee, but God’s eyes are now looking through the clouds upon thee. Swearer! scarce any for whom thou carest heard thy oath; but God heard it; it entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Ah! thou who ledest a filthy life, and yet art a respectable merchant bearing among men a fair and goodly character; thy vices are all known; written in God’s book. He keepeth a diary of all thine acts; and what wilt thou think on that day when a crowd shall be assembled, compared with which this immense multitude is but a drop of a bucket, and God shall read out the story of thy secret life, and men and angels shall hear it. Certain I am there are none of us who would like to have all our secrets read, especially our secret thoughts. If I should select out of this congregation the most holy man, should bring him forward and say, “Now, sir, I know all your thoughts, and am about to tell them,” I am sure he would offer me the largest bribe that he could gather if I would be pleased to conceal at least some of them. “Tell,” He would say, “of my acts; of them I am not ashamed; but do not tell my thoughts and imaginations—of them I must ever stand ashamed before God.” What, then, sinner, will be thy shame when thy privy lusts, thy closet transgressions, thy secret crimes shall be gazetted from God’s throne, published by his own mouth, and with a voice louder than a thousand thunders preached in the ears of an assembled world? What will be thy terror and confusion then, when all the deeds thou hast done shall be published in the face of the sun, in the ears of all mankind. O renounce the foolish hope of secresy, for thy sin is this day recorded, and shall one day be advertised upon the walls of heaven.

II. In the next place, let us notice THE MISERY OF SECRET SINS.

Of all sinners the man who makes a profession of religion, and yet lives in iniquity, is the most miserable. A downright wicked man, who takes a glass in his hand, and says, "I am a drunkard, I am not ashamed of it," he shall be unutterably miserable in worlds to come, but brief though it be, he has his hour of pleasure. A man who curses and swears, and says, "That is my habit, I am a profane man," and makes a profession of it, he has, at least, some peace in his soul; but the man who walks with God's minister, who is united with God's Church, who comes out before God's people, and unites with them, and then lives in sin, what a miserable existence he must have of it! Why, he has a worse existence than the mouse that is in the parlour, running out now and then to pick up the crumbs, and then back again to his hole. Such men must run out now and then to sin; and oh! how fearful they are to be discovered! One day, perhaps, their character turns up; with wonderful cunning they manage to conceal and gloss it over; but the next day something else comes, and they live in constant fear, telling lie after lie, to make the last lie appear truthful, adding deception to deception, in order that they may not be discovered.

"Oh! 'tis a tangled web we weave,

When once we venture to deceive."

If I must be a wicked man, give me the life of a roystering sinner, who sins before the face of day; but, if I must sin, let me not act as a hypocrite and a coward; let me not profess to be God's, and spend my life for the devil. That way of cheating the devil is a thing which every honest sinner will be ashamed of. He will say, "Now, if I do serve my master I will serve him out and out, I will have no sham about it; if I make a profession, I will carry it out; but if I do not, if I live in sin, I am not going to gloss it over by cant and hypocrisy." One thing which has hamstrung the church, and cut her very sinews in twain, has been this most damnable hypocrisy. Oh! in how many places have we men whom you might praise to the very skies, if you could believe their words, but whom you might cast into the nethermost pit if you could see their secret actions. God forgive any of you who are so acting! I had almost said, I can scarce forgive you. I can forgive the man who riots openly, and makes no profession of being better, but the man who fawns, and cants, and pretends, and prays, and then lives in sin, that man I hate, I cannot bear him, I abhor him from my very soul. If he will turn from his ways, I will love him, but in his hypocrisy he is to me the most loathsome of all creatures. 'Tis said the toad doth wear a jewel in her head, but this man hath none, but beareth filthiness about him, while he pretends to be in love with righteousness. A mere profession, my hearers, is but painted pageantry to go to hell in; it is like the plumes upon the hearse and the trappings upon the black horses which drag men to their graves, the funeral array of dead souls. Take heed above everything of a waxen profession that will not stand the sun; take care of a life that needs to have two faces to carry it out; be one thing, or else the other. If you make up your mind to serve Satan, do not pretend to

serve God; and if you serve God, serve him with all your heart. “No man can serve two *masters*,” do not try it, do not endeavour to do it, for no life will be more miserable than that. Above all, beware of committing acts which it will be necessary to conceal. There is a singular poem by Hood, called “The Dream of Eugene Aram”—a most remarkable piece it is indeed, illustrating the point on which I am now dwelling. Aram has murdered a man and cast his body into the river—“a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme.” The next morning he visited the scene of his guilt:

“And sought the black accursed pool,
With a wild misgiving eye;
And he saw the dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry.”

Next he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves, but a mighty wind swept through the wood and left the secret bare before the sun:

“Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
The earth refused to keep;
On land or sea though it should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.”

In plaintive notes he prophesies his own discovery. He buried his victim in a cave, and trod him down with stones, but when years had run their weary round the foul deed was discovered and the murderer put to death.

Guilt is a “grim chamberlain,” even when his fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights, until men burn out their consciences, and become in very deed ripe for the pit. Hypocrisy is a hard game to play at, for it is one deceiver against many observers; and for certain it is a miserable trade, which will earn at last, as its certain climax, a tremendous bankruptcy. Ah! ye who have sinned without discovery, “Be sure your sin will find you out;” and bethink you, it may find you out ere long. Sin, like murder, will come out; men will even tell tales about themselves in their dreams. God has sometimes made men so pricked in their consciences that they have been obliged to stand forth and confess the story. Secret sinner! If thou wantest the foretaste of damnation upon earth, continue in thy secret sins; for no man is more miserable than he who sinneth secretly, and yet trieth to preserve a character. Yon stag, followed by the hungry hounds, with open mouths, is far more happy than the man who is followed by his sins. Yon bird, taken in the fowler’s net, and labouring to escape, is far more happy than he who hath weaved around himself a web of deception, and labours to escape from it day by day by making the toils more thick and the web more strong. Oh! the misery of secret sins! Truly, one may pray, “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

III. But now, next, the guilt THE SOLEMN GUILT OF SECRET SIN.

Now, John, you do not think there is any evil in a thing unless somebody sees it, do you? You feel that it is a very great sin if your master finds you out in robbing the till—but there is no sin if he should not discover it—none at all. And you, sir, you fancy it to be very great sin to play a trick in trade, in case you should be discovered and brought before the court; but to play a trick and never be discovered, that is all fair—do not say a word about it Mr. Spurgeon, it is all business; you must not touch business; tricks that are not discovered, of course you are not to find fault with them. The common measure of sin is the notoriety of it. But I do not believe in that. A sin is a sin, whether done in private or before the wide world. It is singular how men will measure guilt. A railway servant puts up a wrong signal, there is an accident; the man is tried, and severely reprimanded. The day before he put up the wrong signal, but there was no accident, and therefore no one accused him for his neglect. But it was just the same, accident or no accident, the accident did not make the guilt, it was the deed which made the guilt, not the notoriety nor yet the consequence of it. It was his business to have taken care; and he was as guilty the first time as he was the second, for he negligently exposed the lives of men. Do not measure sin by what other people say of it; but measure sin by what God says of it, and what your own conscience says of it.

Now, I hold that secret sin, if anything, is the worst of sin; because secret sin implies that the man who commits it has Atheism in his heart. You will ask how that can be. I reply, he may be a professing Christian, but I shall tell him to his face that he is a practical Atheist, if he labours to keep up a respectable profession before man, and then secretly transgresses. Why, is he not an Atheist, who will say there is a God, yet at the same time thinks more of man than he does of God? Is it not the very essence of Atheism—is it not a denial of the divinity of the Most High when men lightly esteem him and think more of the eye of a creature than of the observation of their Creator? There are some who would not for the life of them say a wicked word in the presence of their minister, but they can do it, knowing God is looking at them. They are Atheists. There are some who would not trick in trade for all the world if they thought they would be discovered, but they can do it while God is with them; that is, they think more of the eye of man than of the eye of God; and they think it worse to be condemned by man than to be condemned by God. Call it by what name you will, the proper name of that is practical Atheism. It is dishonoring God; it is dethroning him; putting him down below his own creatures; and what is that, but to take away his divinity? Brethren, do not, I beseech you, incur the fearful guilt of secret sins. No man can sin a little in secret, it will certainly engender more sin; no man can be a hypocrite and yet be moderate in guilt; he will go from bad to worse, and still proceed, until when his guilt shall be published, he shall be found to be the very worst and most hardened of men. Take heed of the guilt of secret sin. AH, now if could I preach as Rowland Hill did, I would make some people look to themselves at home, and tremble too! It is said that when he preached, there was not a

man in the window, or standing in the crowd, or perched up anywhere, but said, "There, he is preaching at me; he is telling me about my secret sins." And when he proclaimed God's omniscience, it is said men would almost think they saw God bodily present in the midst of them looking at them. And when he had done his sermon, they would hear a voice in their ears, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I cannot see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." I would I could do that; that I could make every man look to himself, and find out his secret sin. Come my hearer, what is it? Bring it forth to the daylight; perhaps it will die in the light of the sun. These things love not to be discovered. Tell thine own conscience, now, what it is. Look it in the face; confess it before God, and may he give thee grace to remove that sin and every other, and turn to him with full purpose of heart! But this know—that thy guilt is guilt discovered or undiscovered, and that if there be any difference it is worse, because it has been secret. God save us from the guilt of secret sin! "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

IV. And note, next, THE DANGER OF SECRET SIN. One danger is, that a man cannot commit a little sin in secret, without being by-and-by betrayed into a public sin. You cannot, sir, though you may think you can preserve a moderation in sin. If you commit one sin, it is like the melting of the lower glacier upon the Alps; the others must follow in time. As certainly as you heap one stone upon the cairn to-day, the next day you will cast another, until the heap, reared stone by stone, shall become a very pyramid. See the coral insect at work, you cannot decree where it shall stay its work. It will not build its rock just as high as you please, it will not stay until it shall be covered with weeds, until the weeds shall decay; and there shall be soil upon it, and an island shall be created by tiny creatures. Sin cannot be held in with bit and bridle. "But I am going to have a little drink now and then, I am only going to be intoxicated once a week or so. Nobody will see it; I shall be in bed directly." You will be drunk in the streets soon. "I am only just going to read one lascivious book; I will put it under the sofa-cover when any one comes in." You will keep it in your library yet, sir. "I am only going into that company now and then." You will go there every day, such is the bewitching character of it; you cannot help it. You may as well ask the lion to let you put your head into his mouth. You cannot regulate his jaws: neither can you regulate sin. Once go into it, you cannot tell when you will be destroyed. You may be such a fortunate individual, that like Van Amburgh you may put your head in and out a great many times; reset assured that one of these days it will be a costly venture. Again, you may labour to conceal your vicious habit, but it will come out, you cannot help it. You keep your little pet sin at home; but mark this, when the door is ajar the dog will be out in the street. Wrap him up in your bosom, put over him fold after fold of hypocrisy to keep him secret, the wretch will be singing some day when you are in company; you cannot keep the evil bird still. Your sin will gad abroad; and what is more, you will not mind it some of these days. A man who indulges in sin privately, by degrees gets his forehead as hard as brass. The first time he sinned, the

drops of sweat stood on his brow at the recollection of what he had done; the second time, no hot sweat on his brow, only an agitation of the muscle; the third time there was the sly, sneaky look, but no agitation; the next time, he sinned a little further; and by degrees he became the bold blasphemer of his God, who exclaimed, "Who am I that I should fear Jehovah, and who is he that I should serve him?" Men go from bad to worse. Launch your boat in the current—it must go where the current takes it. Put yourself in the whirlwind—you are but a straw in the wind: you must go which way the wind carries you—you cannot control yourself. The balloon can mount, but it cannot direct its course; it must go whichever way the wind blows. If you once mount into sin there is no stopping. Take heed if you would not become the worst of characters, take heed of the little sins, they, mounting one upon another, may at last heave you from the summit and destroy your soul for ever. There is a great danger in secret sins.

But I have here some true Christians who indulge in secret sins. They say it is but a little one, and therefore do they spare it. Dear brethren, I speak to you, and I speak to myself, when I say this—let us destroy all our little secret sins. They are called little and if they be, let us remember that it is the foxes, even the little foxes, that spoil our vines; for our vines have tender shoots. Let us take heed of our little sins. A little sin, like a little pebble in the shoe, will make a traveller to heaven walk very wearily. Little sins, like little thieves, may open the door to greater ones outside. Christians, recollect that little sins will spoil your communion with Christ. Little sins, like little stains in silk, may damage the fine texture of fellowship; little sins, like little irregularities in the machinery, may spoil the whole fabric of your religion. The one dead fly spoileth the whole pot of ointment. That one thistle may seed a continent with noxious weeds. Let us, brethren, kill our sins as often as we can find them. One said—"The heart is full of unclean birds; it is a cage of them." "Ah, but," said another divine, "you must not make that an apology, for a Christian's business is to wring their necks." And so it is; if there be evil things, it is our business to kill them. Christians must not tolerate secret sins. We must not harbour traitors; it is high treason against the King of Heaven. Let us drag them out to light, and offer them upon the altar, giving up the dearest of our secret sins at the will and bidding of God. There is a great danger in a little secret sin; therefore avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and shun it; and God give thee grace to overcome it!

V. And now I come, in finishing up, to plead with all my might with some of you whom God has pricked in your consciences. I have come to intreat you, if it be possible, even to tears, that you will give up your secret sins. I have one here for whom I bless God; I love him, though I know him not. He is almost persuaded to be a Christian; he halteth between two opinions; he intendeth to serve God, he striveth to give up sin, but he findeth it a hard struggle, and as yet he knoweth not what shall become of him. I speak to him with all love: my friend, will you have your sin and go to hell, or leave your sin and go to heaven? This is

the solemn alternative: to all awakened sinners I put it; may God choose for you, otherwise I tremble as to which you may choose. The pleasures of this life are so intoxicating, the joys of it so ensnaring, that did I not believe that God worketh in us to will and to do, I should despair of you. But I have confidence that God will decide the matter. Let me lay the alternative before you:—on the one hand there is a hour's merriment, a short life of bliss, and that a poor, poor bliss; on the other hand, there is everlasting life and eternal glory. On the one hand, there is a transient happiness, and afterwards overwhelming woe; in this case there is a solid peace and everlasting joy, and after it overflowing bliss. I shall not fear to be called an Arminian, when I say, as Elijah did, "Choose you this day whom you will serve. If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God serve him." But, now, make your choice deliberately; and may God help you to do it! Do not say you will take up with religion, without first counting the cost of it; remember, there is your lust to be given up, your pleasure to be renounced; can you do it for Christ's sake? Can you? I know you cannot, unless God's grace shall assist you in making such a choice. But can you say, "Yes, by the help of God, earth's gaudy toys, its pomps, pageantries, gewgaws, all these I renounce?—

"These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ or else I die."

Sinner, thou wilt never regret that choice, if God help thee to make it; thou wilt find thyself a happy man here, and thrice happy throughout eternity.

"But," says one, "Sir, I intend to be religious, but I do not hold with your strictness." I do not ask you to do so; I hope, however, you will hold with *God's* strictness, and God's strictness is ten thousand times greater than mine. You may say that I am puritanical in my preaching; God will be puritanical in judging in that great day. I may appear severe, but I can never be so severe as God will be. I may draw the harrow with sharp teeth across your conscience, but God shall drag harrows of eternal fire across you one day. I may speak thundering things! God will not speak them, but hurl them from his hands. Remember, men may laugh at hell, and say there is none; but they must reject their Bibles before they can believe the lie. Men's consciences tell them that

"There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains;
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire and chains."

Sirs, will ye keep your secret sins, and have eternal fire for them? Remember it is of no use, they must all be given up, or else you cannot be God's child. You cannot by any means have both; it cannot be God and the world, it cannot be Christ and the devil; it must be one or the other. Oh! that God would give you grace to resign all; for what are they worth? They are your deceivers now, and will be your tormentors for ever. Oh! that your eyes were open to see the rottenness, the emptiness and trickery of iniquity. Oh! that God would turn you

to himself. Oh! may God give you grace to cross the Rubicon of repentance at this very hour; to say, "Henceforth it is war to the knife with my sins; not one of them will I willingly keep, but down with them, down with them; Canaanite, Hittite, Jebusite, they shall all be driven out."

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee."

"But oh! sir, I cannot do it; it would be like pulling my eyes out." Ay, but hear what Christ says: "It were better for thee to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." "But it would be like cutting my arms off." Ay, and it would be better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, than to be cast into hell fire for ever. Oh! when the sinner comes before God at last, do you think he will speak as he does now? God will reveal his secret sins: the sinner will not then say, "Lord, I thought my secret sins so sweet, I could not give them up." I think I see how changed it will be then. "Sir" you say now, "*you are too strict*;" will you say that when the eyes of the Almighty are glowering on you? You say now, "*Sir, you are too precise*;" will you say that to God Almighty's face? "*Sir, I mean to keep such-and-such a sin*." Can you say it at God's bar at last? You will not dare to do it then. Ah! when Christ comes a second time, there will be a marvellous change in the way men talk. Methinks I see him; there he sits upon his throne. Now, Caiaphas, come and condemn him now! Judas! comes and kiss him now! What do you stick at, man? Are you afraid of him? Now, Barrabbas! go; see whether they will prefer you to Christ now. Swearer, now is your time; you have been a bold man; curse him to his face now. Now drunkard; stagger up to him now. Now infidel; tell him there is no Christ now—now that the world is lit with lightning and the earth is shaken with thunder till the solid pillars thereof do bow themselves—tell God there is no God now; now laugh at the Bible; now scoff at the minister. Why men, what is the matter with you? Why, can't you do it? Ah! there you are; you have fled to the hills and to the rocks—"Rocks hide us! mountains fall on us; hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." Ah! where are now your boasts, your vauntings, and your glories? Alas! alas! for you, in that dread day of wonders.

Secret sinner, what will then become of thee? Go out of this place unmasked; go out to examine thyself, go out to bend thy knee, go out to weep, go out to pray. God give thee grace to believe! And oh, how sweet and pleasant the thought, that this day sinners have fled to Christ, and men have been born again to Jesus! Brethren, ere I finish, I repeat the words at which so many have cavilled—it is now, or never, it is *turn or burn*. Solemnly in God's sight I say it; if it be not God's truth I must answer for it in the great day of account. Your consciences tell you it is true. Take it home, and mock me if you will; this morning I am clear of your blood: if any seek not God, but live in sin, I shall be clear of your blood in that day

when the watchman shall have your souls demanded of him; oh, may God grant that you may be cleared in a blessed manner! When I went down those pulpit stairs a Sabbath or two ago, a friend said to me words which have been in my mind ever since—“Sir, there are nine thousand people this day without excuse in the day of judgment.” It is true of you this morning. If you are damned, it will be not for want of preaching to you, and it shall not be for want of praying for you. God knoweth that if my heart could break of itself, it would, for your souls, for God is my witness, how earnestly I long for you in the bowels of Christ Jesus. Oh, that he might touch your hearts and bring you to him! For death is a solemn thing, damnation is a horrible thing, to be out of Christ is a dreadful thing, to be dead in sin is a terrific thing. May God lead you to view these things as they are, and save you, for his mercy’s sake! “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.”

“Lord, search my soul, try every thought;
Though my own heart accuse me not
Of walking in a false disguise,
I beg the trial of thine eyes.
Doth secret mischief lurk within?
Do I indulge some unknown sin?
O turn my feet whene’er I stray,
And lead me in thy perfect way.”

Lovest Thou Me?

A Sermon

(No. 117)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 7th, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”—[John 21:15-17](#).

How very much like to Christ before his crucifixion was Christ after his resurrection! Although he had lain in the grave, and descended into the regions of the dead, and had retraced his steps to the land of the living, yet how marvellously similar he was in his manners and how unchanged in his disposition. His passion, his death, and his resurrection, could not alter his character as a man any more than they could affect his attributes as God. He is Jesus for ever the same. And when he appeared again to his disciples, he had cast aside none of his kind manners; he had not lost a particle of interest in their welfare; he addressed them just as tenderly as before, and called them his children and his friends. Concerning their temporal condition he was mindful, for he said, “Children, have ye any meat?” And he was certainly quite as watchful over their spiritual state, for after he had supplied their bodies by a rich draught from the sea, with fish, (which possibly he had created for the occasion), he enquires after their souls’ health and prosperity, beginning with the one who might be supposed to have been in the most sickly condition, the one who had denied his Master thrice, and wept bitterly—even Simon Peter. “Simon, son of Jonas,” said Jesus, “lovest thou me?”

Without preface, for we shall have but little time this morning—may God help us to make good use of it!—we shall mention three things: first *a solemn question*—“Lovest thou me?” secondly, a *discreet answer*, “Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;” and thirdly, a *required demonstration of the fact*, “He saith unto him, Feed my lambs;” or, again, “Feed my sheep.”

I. First, then, here was A SOLEMN QUESTION, which our Saviour put to Peter, not for his own information, for, as Peter said, “Thou knowest that I love thee,” but for Peter’s examination. It is well, especially after a foul sin, that the Christian should well probe the

wound. It is right that he should examine himself; for sin gives grave cause for suspicion, and it would be wrong for a Christian to live an hour with a suspicion concerning his spiritual estate, unless he occupy that hour in examination of himself. Self-examination should more especially follow sin, though it ought to be the daily habit of every Christian, and should be practised by him perpetually. Our Saviour, I say, asked this question of Peter, that he might ask it of himself; so we may suppose it asked of us this morning that we may put it to our own hearts. Let each one ask himself then, in his Saviour's name, for his own profit, "Lovest thou the Lord? Lovest thou the Saviour? Lovest thou the ever-blessed Redeemer?"

Note what this question was. *It was a question concerning Peter's love.* He did not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, fearest thou me." He did not say, "Dost thou admire me? Dost thou adore me?" Nor was it even a question concerning his faith. He did not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, believest thou in me?" but he asked him another question, "Lovest thou me?" I take it, that is because love is the very best evidence of piety. Love is the brightest of all the graces; and hence it becomes the best evidence. I do not believe love to be superior to faith; I believe faith to be the groundwork of our salvation; I think faith to be the mother grace, and love springs from it; faith I believe to be the root grace, and love grows from it. But, then, faith is not an evidence for brightness equal to love. Faith, if we have it, is a sure and certain sign that we are God's children; and so is every other grace a sure and certain one, but many of them cannot be seen by others. Love is a more sparkling one than any other. If I have a true fear of God in my heart, then am I God's child; but since fear is a grace that is more dim and hath not that halo of glory over it that love has, love becomes one of the very best evidences and one of the easiest signs of discerning whether we are alive to the Saviour. He that lacketh love, must lack also every other grace in the proportion in which he lacketh love. If love be little, I believe it is a sign that faith is little; for he that believeth much loveth much. If love be little, fear will be little, and courage for God will be little; and whatsoever graces there be, though faith lieth at the root of them all, yet do they so sweetly hang on love, that if love be weak, all the rest of the graces most assuredly will be so. Our Lord asked Peter, then, that question, "Lovest thou me?"

And note, again, that *he did not ask Peter anything about his doings.* He did not say, "Simon Peter, how much hast thou wept? How often hast thou done penance on account of thy great sin? How often hast thou on thy knees sought mercy at my hand for the slight thou hast done to me, and for that terrible cursing and swearing wherewith thou didst disown thy Lord, whom thou hadst declared thou wouldst follow even to prison and to death?" No; it was not in reference to his works, but in reference to the state of his heart that Jesus said, "Lovest thou me?" To teach us this; that though works do follow after a sincere love, yet love excelleth the works, and works without love are not evidences worth having. We may have some tears; but they are not the tears that God shall accept, if there be no love to him. We may have some works; but they are not acceptable works, if they are not done out of

love to his person. We may perform very many of the outward, ritual observances of religion; but unless love lieth at the bottom, all these things are vain and useless. The question, then, "Lovest thou me?" is a very vital question; far more so than one that merely concerns the outward conduct. It is a question that goes into the very heart, and in such a way that it brings the whole heart to one question; for if love be wrong, everything else is wrong. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Ah! dear beloved, we have very much cause for asking ourselves this question. If our Saviour were no more than a man like ourselves, he might often doubt whether we love him at all. Let me just remind you of sundry things which give us very great cause to ask this question: "Lovest thou me?" I will deal only with the last week. Come, my Christian brother, look at thine own conduct. Do not thy sins make thee doubt whether thou dost love thy Master? Come, look over the sins of this week: when thou wast speaking with an angry word and with a sullen look, might not thy Lord have touched thee, and said, "Lovest thou me?" When thou wast doing such-and-such a thing, which thou right well knewest in thy conscience was not according to his precept, might he not have said, "Lovest thou me?" Canst thou not remember the murmuring word because something had gone wrong with thee in business this week, and thou wast speaking ill of the God of providence for it? Oh, might not the loving Saviour, with pity in his languid eye, have said to thee, "What, speak thus? Lovest thou me?" I need not stop to mention the various sins of which ye have been guilty. Ye have sinned, I am sure, enough to give good ground for self-suspicion, if ye did not still hang on this; that his love to you, not your love to him, is the seal of your discipleship. Oh, do you not think within yourselves, "If I had loved him more, should I have sinned so much? And oh, can I love him when I have broken so many of his commandments! Have I reflected his glorious image to the world as I should have done? Have I not wasted many hours within this week that I might have spent in winning souls to him? Have I not thrown away many precious moments in light and frivolous conversation which I might have spent in earnest prayer? Oh! how many words have I uttered, which if they have not been filthy, (as I trust they have not) yet have not been such as have ministered grace to the hearers? Oh, how many follies have I indulged in? How many sins have I winked at? How many crimes have I covered over? How have I made my Saviour's heart to bleed? How have I done dishonor to his cause? How have I in some degree disgraced my heart's profession of love to him?" Oh, ask these questions of thyself, beloved, and say, "Is this thy kindness to thy Friend?"

But I hope this week has been one wherein thou hast sinned little openly as to the world, or even in thine own estimation, as to open acts of crime. But now let me put another question to thee, *Does not thy worldliness make thee doubt?* How hast thou been occupied with the world, from Monday morning to the last hour of Saturday night? Thou hast scarce had time to think of him. What corners hast thou pushed thy Jesus into, to make room for

thy bales of goods? How hast thou stowed him away into one short five minutes, to make room for thy ledger or thy day-book? How little time hast thou given to him! Thou hast been occupied with the shop, with the exchange, and the farmyard; and thou hast had little time to commune with him! Come, just think! remember any one day this week; canst thou say that thy goal always flew upward with passionate desires to him? Didst thou pant like a hart for thy Saviour during the week. Nay, perhaps there was a whole day went by, and thou scarcely thoughtest of him till the winding up of it; and then thou couldst only upbraid thyself, "How have I forgotten Christ to-day? I have not beheld his person; I have not walked with him; I have not done as Enoch did! I knew he would come into the shop with me; I knew he is such a blessed Christ that he would stand behind the counter with me; I knew he was such a joyous Lord Jesus that he would walk through the market with me! but I left him at home, and forgot him all the day long." Surely, surely, beloved, when thou rememberest thy worldliness, thou must say of thyself, "O Lord, thou mightest well ask, 'Lovest thou me?'"

Consider again, I beseech thee, *how cold thou hast been this week at the mercy-seat*. Thou hast been there, for thou canst not live without it; thou hast lifted up thy heart in prayer, for thou art a Christian, and prayer is as necessary to thee as thy breath. But oh! with what a poor asthmatic breath hast thou lived this week! How little hast thou breathed? Dost not remember how hurried was thy prayer on Monday morning, how driven thou wast on Tuesday night? Canst thou not recollect how languid was thy heart, when on another occasion thou wast on thy knees? Thou hast had little wrestling, mayhap, this week; little agonising; thou hast had little of the prayer which prevaieth; thou hast scarcely laid hold of the horns of the altar; thou hast stood in the distance, and seen the smoke at the altar, but thou hast not laid hold of the horns of it. Come, ask thyself, do not thy prayers make thee doubt? I say, honestly before you all, my own prayers often make me doubt; and I know nothing that gives me more grave cause of disquietude. When I labour to pray—oh! that rascally devil!—fifty thousand thoughts he tries to inject, to take me off from prayer; and when I will and must pray, oh, what an absence there is of that burning fervent desire; and when I would come right close to God, when I would weep my very eyes out in penitence, and would believe and take the blessing, oh, what little faith and what little penitence there is! Verily, I have thought that prayer has made me more unbelieving than anything else. I could believe over the tops of my sins, but sometimes I can scarcely believe over the tops of my prayers—for oh! how cold is prayer when it is cold! Of all things that are bad when cold, I think prayer is the worst, for it becomes like a very mockery, and instead of warming the heart, it makes it colder than it was before, and seems even to damp its life and spirit, and fills it full of doubts whether it is really a heir of heaven and accepted of Christ. Oh! look at thy cold prayers, Christian, and say is not thy Saviour right to ask this question very solemnly, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

But stop, again; just one more word for thee to reflect upon. Perhaps thou hast had much prayer. and this has been a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. But yet, mayhap, thou knowest, thou hast not gone so far this week as thou mightest have done, in another exercise of godliness that is even better than prayer, I mean *communion and fellowship*. Oh! beloved, thou hast this week had but little sitting under the apple tree, and finding its shadow great delight to thee. Thou hast not gone much this week to the banqueting house, and had its banner of love over thee. Come, bethink thyself, how little hast thou seen thy Lord this week! Perhaps he has been absent the greater part of the time; and hast thou not groaned? hast thou not wept? hast thou not sighed after him? Sure, then, thou canst not have loved him as thou shouldst, else thou couldst not have borne his absence; thou couldst not have endured it calmly, if thou hadst the affection for him a sanctified spirit has for its Lord. Thou didst have one sweet visit from him in the week, and why didst thou let him go? Why didst thou not constrain him to abide with thee? Why didst thou not lay hold of the skirts of his garment, and say, “Why shouldst thou be like a wayfaring man, and as one that turneth aside, and tarrieth for a night? Oh! my lord, thou shalt dwell with me; I will keep thee; I will detain thee in my company; I cannot let thee go; I love thee, and I will constrain thee to dwell with me this night and the next day; long as I can keep thee, will I keep thee.” But no; thou wast foolish; thou didst let him go. Oh! soul, why didst thou not lay hold of his arm, and say, “I will not let thee go.” But thou didst lay hold on him so feebly, thou didst suffer him to depart so quickly, he might have turned round, and said to thee, as he said to Simon, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”

Now, I have asked you all these questions, because I have been asking them of myself. I feel that I must answer to nearly every one of them, “Lord, there is great cause for me to ask myself that question;” and I think that most of you, if you are honest to yourselves, will say the same. I do not approve of the man that says, “I know I love Christ, and I never have a doubt about it;” because we often have reason to doubt ourselves; a believer’s strong faith is not a strong faith in his own love to Christ—it is a strong faith in Christ’s love to him. There is no faith which always believes that it loves Christ. Strong faith has its conflicts; and a true believer will often wrestle in the very teeth of his own feelings. Lord, if I never did love thee, nevertheless, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner. Lord, I still believe; help thou mine unbelief. The disciple can believe, when he feels no love; for he can believe that Christ loveth the soul; and when he hath no evidence he can come to Christ without evidence, and lay hold of him, just as he is, with naked faith, and still hold fast by him. Though he see not his signs, though he walk in darkness and there be no light, still may he trust in the Lord, and stay upon his God;—but to be certain at all times that we love the Lord is quite another matter; about this we have need continually to question ourselves, and most scrupulously to examine both the nature and the extent of our evidences.

II. And now I come to the second thing, which is A DISCREET ANSWER. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Simon gave a very good answer. Jesus asked him, in the first place, whether he loved him better than others. Simon would not say that: he had once been a little proud—more than a little—and thought he was better than the other disciples. But this time he evaded that question; he would not say that he loved better than others. And I am sure there is no loving heart that will think it loves even better than the least of God’s children. I believe the higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem; and he will be the last person to claim any supremacy over others in the divine grace of love to Jesus. But mark how Simon Peter did answer: he did not answer as to the quantity but as to the quality of his love. He would aver that he loved Christ, but not that he loved Christ better than others. “Lord, I cannot say how much I love thee; but thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I do love thee. So far I can aver: as to the quantity of my love, I cannot say much about it.”

But just notice, again, the discreet manner in which Peter answered. Some of us, if we had been asked that question, would have answered foolishly. We should have said, “Lord, I have preached for thee so many times this week; Lord, I have distributed of my substance to the poor this week. Blessed be thy name, thou hast given me grace to walk humbly, faithfully, and honestly and therefore, Lord, I think I can say, ‘I love thee.’” We should have brought forward our good works before our Master, as being the evidences of our love; we should have said, “Lord, thou hast seen me during this week; as Nehemiah did of old, “Forget not my good works. O Lord, I thank thee; I know they are thy gifts, but I think they are proofs of my love.” That would have been a very good answer if we had been questioned by our fellow man, and he had said, “You do not always love your Saviour;” but it would be foolish for us to tell the Master that. Peter’s answer was wise; “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” You know the Master might have said to Peter, had he appealed to his works, “Yes, thou mayest preach, and yet not love me; thou mayest pray, after a fashion, and yet not love me; thou mayest do all these works, and yet have no love to me. I did not ask thee what are the evidences of thy love, I asked thee the fact of it.” Very likely all my dear friends here would not have answered in the fashion I have supposed; but they would have said, “Love thee Lord? Why, my heart is all on fire towards thee; I feel as if I could go to prison and to death for thee! Sometimes, when I think of thee, my heart is ravished with bliss; and when thou art absent, O Lord, I moan and cry like a dove that has lost its mate. Yes, I feel I love thee, O my Christ.” But that would have been very foolish, because although we may often rejoice in our own feelings—they are joyful things—it would not do to plead them with our Lord, for he might answer, “Ah! thou feelest joyful at the mention of my name. So, no doubt, has many a deluded one, because he had a fictitious faith, and a fancied hope in Christ; therefore the name of Christ seemed to gladden him. Thou sayest, ‘I have felt dull when thou hast been absent.’ That might have been accounted for from natural circumstances;

you had a headache, perhaps, or some other ailment. 'But,' sayest thou, 'I felt so happy when he was present that I thought I could die.' Ah! in such manner Peter had spoken many a time before; but a sorry mess he made of it when he trusted his feelings; for he would have sunk into the sea but for Christ; and eternally damned his soul, if it had not been for his grace, when, with cursing and swearing he thrice denied his Lord. But no, Peter was wise; he did not bring forward his frames and feelings, nor did he bring his evidences: though they are good in themselves, he did not bring them before Christ. But, as though he shall say, "Lord, I appeal to thine omnipotence. I am not going to tell thee that the volume of my heart must contain such-and-such matter, because there is such-and-such a mark on its cover; for, Lord, thou canst read inside of it; and, therefore, I need not tell thee what the title is, nor read over to thee the index of the contents. Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

Now, could we, this morning, dear friends, give such an answer as that to the question? If Christ should come here, if he were now to walk down these aisles, and along the pews, could we appeal to his own divine Omniscience, his infallible knowledge of our hearts, that we all love him? There is a test-point between a hypocrite and a real Christian. If thou art a hypocrite, thou mightest say, "Lord, my minister knows that I love thee; Lord, the deacons know that I love thee; they think I do, for they have given me a ticket; the members think I love thee; for they see me sitting at thy table; my friends think I love thee, for they often hear me talk about thee." But thou couldst not say, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;" thine own heart is witness that thy secret works belie thy confession, for thou art without prayer in secret; and thou canst preach a twenty minutes' prayer in public. Thou art niggardly and parsimonious in giving to the cause of Christ; but thou canst sport thy name to be seen. Thou art an angry, petulant creature; but when thou comest to the house of God, thou hast a pious whine, and talkest like a canting hypocrite, as if thou wert a very gentlemanly man, and never seemed angry. Thou canst take thy Maker's name in vain; but if thou hear another do it thou wouldst be mighty severe upon him. Thou affectest to be very pious, and yet if men knew of that widow's house that is sticking in thy throat, and of that orphan's patrimony which thou hast taken from him, thou wouldst leave off trumpeting thy good deeds. Thine own heart tells thee thou art a liar before God. But thou, O sincere Christian, thou canst welcome thy Lord's question, and answer it with holy fear and gracious confidence. Yes, thou mayest welcome the question. Such a question was never put to Judas. The Lord loved Peter so much that he was jealous over him, or he never would have thus challenged his attachment. And in this kind doth he often appeal to the affections of those whom he dearly loves. The response likewise is recorded for thee, "Lord, thou knowest all things." Canst thou not look up, though scorned by men, though even rejected by thy minister, though kept back by the deacons, and looked upon with disesteem by some—canst thou not look up, and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?" Do it not in brag and bravado; but if you can do it sincerely, be happy, bless God that he has given you a sincere

love to the Saviour, and ask him to increase it from a spark to a flame, and from a grain to a mountain. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

III. And now here is A DEMONSTRATION REQUIRED—"Feed my lambs: feed my sheep." That was Peter's demonstration. It is not necessary that it should be our way of showing our love. There are different ways for different disciples. There are some who are not qualified to feed lambs, for they are only little lambs themselves. There are some that could not feed sheep, for they cannot at present see afar off; they are weak in the faith, and not qualified to teach at all. They have other means, however, of showing their love to the Saviour. Let us offer a few words upon this matter.

"Lovest thou me?" Then one of the best evidences thou canst give is *to feed my lambs*. Have I two or three little children that love and fear my name? If thou wantest to do a deed, which shall show that thou art a true lover, and not a proud pretender; go and feed them. Are there a few little ones whom I have purchased with my blood in an infant class? Dost thou want to do something which shall evidence that thou art indeed mine? Then sit not down with the elders, dispute not in the temple; I did that myself; but go thou, and sit down with the young orphans, and teach them the way to the kingdom. "Feed my lambs."

Dearly beloved, I have been of late perplexing myself with one thought: that our church-government is not scriptural. It is scriptural as far as it goes; but it is not according to the whole of Scripture; neither do we practise many excellent things that ought to be practised in our churches. We have received into our midst a large number of young persons; in the ancient churches there was what was called the catechism class—I believe there ought to be such a class now. The Sabbath-school, I believe, is in the Scripture; and I think there ought to be on the Sabbath afternoon, a class of the young people of this church, who are members already, to be taught by some of the elder members. Now-a-days, when we get the lambs, we just turn them adrift in the meadow, and there we leave them. There are more than a hundred young people in this church who positively, though they are members, ought not to be left alone; but some of our elders, if we have elders, and some who ought to be ordained elders, should make it their business to teach them further, to instruct them in the faith, and so keep them hard and fast by the truth of Jesus Christ. If we had elders, as they had in all the apostolic churches, this might in some degree be attended to. But now the hands of our deacons are full, they do much of the work of the eldership, but they cannot do any more than they are doing, for they are toiling hard already. I would that some here whom God has gifted, and who have time, would spend their afternoons in taking a class of those who live around them, of their younger brethren, asking them to their houses for prayer and pious instruction, that so the lambs of the flock may be fed. By God's help I will take care of the sheep; I will endeavour under God to feed them, as well as I can, and preach the gospel to them. You that are older in the faith and stronger in it, need not that careful cautious feeding

which is required by the lambs. But there are many in our midst, good pious souls who love the Saviour as much as the sheep do; but one of their complaints which I have often heard is, "Oh I sir, I joined your church, I thought they would be all brothers and sisters to me, and that I could speak to them, and they would teach me and be kind to me. Oh ! sir, I came, and nobody spoke to me." I say, "Why did not you speak to them first ?" "Oh !" they reply, "I did not like." Well, they should have liked, I am well aware; but if we had some means of feeding the lambs, it would be a good way of proving to our Saviour and to the world, that we really do endeavour to follow him. I hope some of my friends will take that hint; and if, in concert with me, my brethren in office will endeavour to do something in that way, I think it will be no mean proof of their love to Christ. "Feed my lambs," is a great duty; let us try to practise it as we are able.

But, beloved, we cannot all do that; the lambs cannot feed the lambs; the sheep cannot feed the sheep exactly. There must be some appointed to these offices. And therefore, in the Saviour's name, allow me to say to some of you, that there are different kinds of proof you must give. "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Then preserve that prayer-meeting attend to it; see that it is kept going on, and that it does not fall to the ground. "Simon son of Jonas lovest thou me?" See to thy servants; see that they go to the house of God, and instruct them in the faith. There is a sister: Lovest thou Christ? "Yea, Lord." Perhaps it is as much as you can do—perhaps it is as much as you ought to do—to train up your children in the fear of the Lord. It is of no use to trouble yourselves about duties that God never meant you to do, and leave your own vineyard at home to itself. Just take care of your own children; perhaps that is as good a proof as Christ wants of you that you are feeding his lambs. You have your own office, to which Christ has appointed you: seek not to run away from it, but endeavour to do what you can to serve your Master therein. But, I beseech you, do something to prove your love; do not be sitting down doing nothing. Do not be folding your hands and arms, for such people perplex a minister most, and bring the most ruin on a church—such as do nothing. You are always the readiest to find fault. I have marked it here, that the very people who are quarrelling with everything are the people that are doing nothing, or are good for nothing. They are sure to quarrel with everything else, because they are doing nothing themselves; and therefore they have time to find fault with other people. Do not O Christian, say that thou lovest Christ, and yet do nothing for him. Doing is a good sign of living; and he can scarce be alive unto God that does nothing for God. We must let our works evidence the sincerity of our love to our Master. "Oh!" say you, "but we are doing a little." Can you do any more? If you can, then do it. If you cannot do more, then God requires no more of you; doing to the utmost of your ability is your best proof; but if you can do more, inasmuch as ye keep back any part of what ye can do, in that degree ye give cause to yourselves to distrust your love to Christ. Do all you can to your very utmost; serve him abundantly; ay, and superabundantly: seek

to magnify his name; and if ever you do too much for Christ, come and tell me of it; if you ever do too much for Christ, tell the angels of it—but you will never do that. He gave himself for you; give yourselves to him.

You see, my friends, how I have been directing you to search your own hearts, and I am almost afraid that some of you will mistake my intention. Have I a poor soul here who really deplores the langour of her affections? Perhaps you have determined to ask yourself as many questions as you can with a view of reviving the languid sparks of love. Let me tell you then that the pure flame of love must be always nourished where it was first kindled. When I admonished you to look to yourself it was only to detect the evil; would you find the remedy, you must direct your eyes, not to your own heart, but to the blessed heart of Jesus—to the Beloved one—to my gracious Lord and Master. And wouldst thou be ever conscious of the sweet swellings up of thy heart towards him; thou canst only prove this by a constant sense of his tender love to thee. I rejoice to know that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of love, and the ministry of the Spirit is endeared to me in nothing so much as this, that he takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to me, spreading abroad the Saviour's love in my heart, until it constrains all my passions, awakens the tenderest of all tender emotions, reveals my union to him, and occasions my strong desire to serve him. Let not love appear to thee as a stern duty, or an arduous effort; rather look to Jesus, yield thyself up to his gracious charms till thou art ravished with his beauty and preciousness. But ah! if thou art slack in the proofs thou givest, I shall know thou art not walking with him in holy communion.

And allow me to suggest one profitable way of improving the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. That is: while you are partaking of it, my friends, renew your dedication to Christ. Seek this morning to give yourselves over afresh to your Master. Say with your hearts, what I shall now say with my lips: "Oh I my precious Lord Jesus, I do love thee; thou knowest I have in some degree given myself to thee up to this time, thanks to thy grace! Blessed be thy name, that thou hast accepted the deeds of so unworthy a servant. O Lord, I am conscious that I have not devoted myself to thee as I ought; I know that in many things I have come short. I will make no resolution to live better to thine honor, but I will offer the prayer that thou wouldst help me so to do. Oh! Lord, I give to thee my health, my life, my talents, my power, and all I have! Thou hast bought me, and bought me wholly: then, Lord, take me this morning, baptize me in the Spirit; let me now feel an entire affection to thy blessed person. May I have that love which conquers sin and purifies the soul—that love which can dare danger and encounter difficulties for thy sake. May I henceforth and for ever be a consecrated vessel of mercy, having been chosen of thee from before the foundation of the world! Help me to hold fast that solemn choice of thy service which I desire this morning, by thy grace to renew." And when you drink the blood of Christ, and eat his flesh spiritually—in the type and in the emblem, then I beseech you, let the solemn recollection of his

agony and suffering for you inspire you with a greater love, that you may be more devoted to his service than ever. If that be done, I shall have the best of churches; if that be done by us, the Holy Spirit helping us to carry it out, we shall all be good men and true, holding fast by him, and we shall not need to be ashamed in the awful day.

As for you that have never given yourselves to Christ, I dare not tell you to renew a vow which you have never made, nor dare I ask you to make a vow, which you would never keep. I can only pray for you, that God the Saviour would be pleased to reveal himself unto your heart, that “a sense of blood-bought pardon” may “dissolve your hearts of stone;” that you may be brought to give yourselves to him, knowing that if you have done that, you have the best proof that he has given himself for you. May God Almighty bless you: those of you who depart, may he dismiss with his blessing: and those who remain, may you receive his favour, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

The Blood-Shedding

A Sermon

(No. 118)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 22, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”—[Hebrews 9: 22](#).

I will show you three fools. One is yonder soldier, who has been wounded on the field of battle, grievously wounded, well nigh unto death; the surgeon is by his side, and the soldier asks him a question. Listen, and judge of his folly. What question does he ask? Does he raise his eyes with eager anxiety and inquire if the wound be mortal, if the practitioner’s skill can suggest the means of healing, or if the remedies are within reach and the medicine at hand? No, nothing of the sort; strange to tell, he asks, “Can you inform me with what sword I was wounded, and by what Russian I have been thus grievously mauled? I want,” he adds, “to learn every minute particular respecting the origin of my wound.” The man is delirious or his head is affected. Surely such questions at such a time are proof enough that he is bereft of his senses.

There is another fool. The storm is raging, the ship is flying impetuous before the gale, the dark scud moves swiftly over head, the masts are creaking, the sails are rent to rags, and still the gathering tempest grows more fierce. Where is the captain? Is he busily engaged on the deck, is he manfully facing the danger, and skilfully suggesting means to avert it? No sir, he has retired to his cabin, and there with studious thoughts and crazy fancies he is speculating on the place where this storm took its rise. “It is mysterious, this wind; no one ever yet” he says, “has been able to discover it.” And, so reckless of the vessel, the lives of the passengers, and his own life, he is careful only to solve his curious questions. The man is mad, sir; take the rudder from his hand; he is clean gone mad! If he should ever run on shore, shut him up as a hopeless lunatic.

The third fool I shall doubtless find among yourselves. You are sick and wounded with sin, you are in the storm and hurricane of Almighty vengeance, and yet the question which you would ask of me, this morning, would be, “Sir, what is the origin of evil?” You are mad, Sir, spiritually mad; that is not the question you would ask if you were in a sane and healthy state of mind; your question would be: “How can I get rid of the evil?” Not, “How did it come into the world?” but “How am I to escape from it?” Not, “How is it that hail descends from heaven upon Sodom?” but “How may I, like Lot, escape out of the city to a Zoar.” Not, “How is it that I am sick?” but “Are there medicines that will heal me? Is there a physician to be found that can restore my soul to health?” Ah! you trifle with subtleties while you neglect certainties. More questions have been asked concerning the origin of evil than upon

anything else. Men have puzzled their heads, and twisted their brains into knots, in order to understand what men can never know—how evil came into this world, and how its entrance is consistent with divine goodness? The broad fact is this, there is evil; and your question should be, “How can I escape from the wrath to come, which is engendered of this evil?” In answering that question this verse stands right in the middle of the way (like the angel with the sword, who once stopped Balaam on his road to Barak,) “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Your real want is to know how you can be saved; if you are aware that your sin must be pardoned or punished, your question will be, “How can it be pardoned?” and then point blank in the very teeth of your enquiry, there stands out this fact: “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Mark you, this is not merely a Jewish maxim; it is a world-wide and eternal truth. It pertaineth not to the Hebrews only, but to the Gentiles likewise. Never in any time, never in any place, never in any person, can there be remission apart from shedding of blood. This great fact, I say, is stamped on nature; it is an essential law of God’s moral government, it is one of the fundamental principles which can neither be shaken nor denied. Never can there be any exception to it; it stands the same in every place throughout all ages—“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” It was so with the Jews; they had no remission without the shedding of blood. Some things under the Jewish law might be cleansed by water or by fire, but in no case where absolute sin was concerned was there ever purification without blood—teaching this doctrine, that blood, and blood alone, must be applied for the remission of sin. Indeed the very heathen seem to have an inkling of this fact. Do not I see their knives gory with the blood of victims? Have I not heard horrid tales of human immolations, of holocausts, of sacrifices; and what mean these, but that there lies deep in the human breast, deep as the very existence of man, this truth,—“that without shedding of blood there is no remission.” And I assert once more, that even in the hearts and consciences of my hearers there is something which will never let them believe in remission apart from a shedding of blood. This is the grand truth of Christianity, and it is a truth which I will endeavour now to fix upon your memory; and may God by his grace bless it to your souls. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.”

First, let me show you the blood-shedding, before I begin to dwell upon the text. Is there not a special blood-shedding meant? Yes, there was a shedding of most precious blood, to which I must forthwith refer you. I shall not tell you now of massacres and murders, nor of rivers of blood of goats and rams. There was a blood-shedding once, which did all other shedding of blood by far outvie; it was a man—a God—that shed his blood at that memorable season. Come and see it. Here is a garden dark and gloomy; the ground is crisp with the cold frost of midnight; between those gloomy olive trees I see a man, I hear him groan out his life in prayer; hearken, angels, hearken men, and wonder; it is the Saviour groaning out his soul! Come and see him. Behold his brow! O heavens! drops of blood are streaming down his face, and from his body; every pore is open, and it sweats! but not the sweat of

men that toil for bread; it is the sweat of one that toils for heaven—he “sweats great drops of blood!” That is the blood-shedding, without which there is no remission. Follow that man further; they have dragged him with sacrilegious bands from the place of his prayer and his agony, and they have taken him to the hall of Pilate; they seat him in a chair and mock him; a robe of purple is put on his shoulders in mockery; and mark his brow—they have put about it a crown of thorns, and the crimson drops of gore are rushing down his cheeks! Ye angels! the drops of blood are running down his cheeks! But turn aside that purple robe for a moment. His back is bleeding. Tell me, demons who did this. They lift up the thongs, still dripping clots of gore; they scourge and tear his flesh, and make a river of blood to run down his shoulders! That is the shedding of blood without which there is no remission. Not yet have I done: they hurry him through the streets; they fling him on the ground; they nail his hands and feet to the transverse wood, they hoist it in the air, they dash it into its socket, it is fixed, and there he hangs the Christ of God. Blood from his head, blood from his hands, blood from his feet! In agony unknown he bleeds away his life; in terrible throes he exhausts his soul. “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.” And then see! they pierce his side, and forthwith runneth out blood and water. This is the shedding of blood, sinners and saints; this is the awful shedding of blood, the terrible pouring out of blood, without which for you, and for the whole human race, there is no remission.

I have then, I hope, brought my text fairly out: without this shedding of blood there is no remission. Now I shall come to dwell upon it more particularly.

Why is it that this story doth not make men weep? I told it ill, you say. Ay, so I did; I will take all the blame. But, sirs, if it were told as ill as men could speak, were our hearts what they should be, we should bleed away our lives in sorrow. Oh! it was a horrid murder that! It was not an act of regicide; it was not the deed of a fratricide, or of a parricide; it was—what shall I say?—I must make a word—a deicide; the killing of a God; the slaying of him who became incarnate for our sins. Oh! if our hearts were but soft as iron, we must weep, if they were but tender as the marble of the mountains, we should shed great drops of grief; but they are harder than the nether millstone; we forget the griefs of him that died this ignominious death, we pity not his sorrows, nor do we account the interest we have in him as though he suffered and accomplished all for us. Nevertheless, here stands the principle—“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”

Now, I take it, there are two things here. First, there is a *negative expressed*: “No remission without shedding of blood.” And then there is a *positive implied*, forsooth, with shedding of blood there is remission.

I. First, I say, here is A NEGATIVE EXPRESSED: there is no remission without blood—without the blood of Jesus Christ. This is of divine authority; when I utter this sentence I have divinity to plead. It is not a thing which you may doubt, or which you may believe; it must be believed and received, otherwise you have denied the Scriptures and turned

aside from God. Some truths I utter, perhaps, have little better basis than my own reasoning and inference, which are of little value enough; but this I utter, not with quotations from God's Word to back up my assertion, but from the lips of God himself. Here it stands in great letters, "There is no remission." So divine its authority. Perhaps you will kick at it: but remember, your rebellion is not against me, but against God, If any of you reject this truth, I shall not controvert; God forbid I should turn aside from proclaiming his gospel, to dispute with men. I have God's irrevocable statute to plead now, here it stands: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." You may believe or disbelieve many things the preacher utters; but this you disbelieve at the peril of your souls. It is God's utterance: will you tell God to his face you do not believe it? That were impious. The negative is divine in its authority; bow yourselves to it, and accept its solemn warning.

But some men will say that God's way of saving men, by shedding of blood, is a cruel way, an unjust way, an unkind way; and all kinds of things they will say of it. Sirs, I have nothing to do with your opinion of the matter; it is so. If you have any faults to find with your Maker, fight your battles out with him at last. But take heed before you throw the gauntlet down; it will go ill with a worm when he fighteth with his Maker, and it will go ill with you when you contend with him. The doctrine of atonement when rightly understood and faithfully received, is delightful, for it exhibits boundless love, immeasurable goodness, and infinite truth; but to unbelievers it will always be a hated doctrine. So it must be sirs; you hate your own mercies; you despise your own salvation. I tarry not to dispute with you; I affirm it in God's name: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

And note *how decisive this is in its character*: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "But, sir, can't I get my sins forgiven by my repentance? if I weep, and plead, and pray, will not God forgive me for the sake of my tears?" "No remission," says the text, "without shedding of blood." "But, sir, if I never sin again, and if I serve God more zealously than other men, will he not forgive me for the sake of my obedience?" "No remission," says the text, "without shedding of blood." "But, sir, may I not trust that God is merciful, and will forgive me without the shedding of blood?" "No," says the text, "without shedding of blood there is no remission;" none whatever. It cuts off every other hope. Bring your hopes here, and if they are not based in blood, and stamped with blood, they are as useless as castles in the air, and dreams of the night. "There is no remission," says the text, in positive and plain words; and yet men will be trying to get remission in fifty other ways, until their special pleading becomes as irksome to us as it is useless for them. Sirs, do what you like, say what you please, but you are as far off remission when you have done your best, as you were when you began, except you put confidence in the shedding of our Saviour's blood, and in the blood-shedding alone, for without it there is no remission.

And note again *how universal it is in its character*. "What! may not I get remission without blood-shedding?" says the king; and he comes with the crown on his head; "May

not I in all my robes, with this rich ransom, get pardon without the blood-shedding?" "None," is the reply; "none." Forthwith comes the wise man, with a number of letters after his name—"Can I not get remission by these grand titles of my learning?" "None; none." Then comes the benevolent man—"I have dispersed my money to the poor, and given my bounty to feed them; shall not I get remission?" "None;" says the text, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." How this puts everyone on a level! My lord, you are no bigger than your coachman; Sir, squire, you are no better off than John that ploughs the ground; minister, your office does not serve you with any exemption—your poorest hearer stands on the very same footing. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." No hope for the best, any more than for the worst, without this shedding of blood. Oh! I love the gospel, for this reason among others, because it is such a levelling gospel. Some persons do not like a levelling gospel; nor would I, in some senses of the word. Let men have their rank, and their titles, and their riches, if they will; but I do like, and I am sure all good men like, to see rich and poor meet together and feel that they are on a level; the gospel makes them so. It says "Put up your money-bags, they will not procure you remission; roll up your diploma, that will not get you remission; forget your farm and your park, they will not get you remission; just cover up that escutcheon, that coat of arms will not get you remission. Come, you ragged beggars, filthy off-scourings of the world, penniless; come hither; here is remission as much for you, ill-bred and ill-mannered though ye be, as for the noble, the honorable, the titled, and the wealthy. All stand on a level here; the text is universal: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Mark too, *how perpetual my text is*. Paul said, "there is no remission;" I must repeat this testimony too. When thousands of years have rolled away, some minister may stand on this spot and say the same. This will never alter at all; it will always be so, in the next world as well as this: no remission without shedding of blood. "Oh! yes there is," says one, "the priest takes the shilling, and he gets the soul out of purgatory." That is a mere pretence; it never was in. But without shedding of blood there is no real remission. There may be tales and fancies, but there is no true remission without the blood of propitiation. Never, though you strained yourselves in prayer; never, though you wept yourselves away in tears; never, though you groaned and cried till your heart-strings break; never in this world, nor in that which is to come, can the forgiveness of sins be procured on any other ground than redemption by the blood of Christ, and never can the conscience be cleansed but by faith in that sacrifice. The fact is, beloved, there is no use for you to satisfy your hearts with anything less than what satisfied God the Father. Without the shedding of blood nothing would appease his justice; and without the application of that same blood nothing can purge your consciences.

II. But as there is no remission without blood-shedding, IT IS IMPLIED THAT THERE IS REMISSION WITHOUT IT. Mark it well, this remission is a present fact. The blood having been already shed, the remission is already obtained. I took you to the garden of

Gethsemane and the mount of Calvary to see the bloodshedding. I might now conduct you to another garden and another mount to shew you the grand proof of the remission. Another garden, did I say? Yes, it is a garden, fraught with many pleasing and even triumphant reminiscences. Aside from the haunts of this busy world, in it was a new sepulchre, hewn out of a rock where Joseph of Arimathea thought his own poor body should presently be laid. But there they laid Jesus after his crucifixion.

He had stood surety for his people, and the law had demanded his blood; death had held him with strong grasp; and that tomb was, as it were, the dungeon of his captivity, when, as the good shepherd, he laid down his life for the sheep. Why, then, do I see in that garden, an open, untenanted grave? I will tell you. The debts are paid, the sins are cancelled—, the remission is obtained. How, think you? That great Shepherd of the sheep hath been brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and in him also we have obtained redemption through his blood. There, beloved, is proof the first.

Do you ask further evidence? I will take you to Mount Olivet. You shall behold Jesus there with his hands raised like the High Priest of old to bless his people, and while he is blessing them, he ascends, the clouds receiving him out of their sight. But why, you ask, oh why hath he thus ascended, and whither is he gone? Behold he entereth, not into the holy place made with hands, but he entereth into heaven itself with his own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Now, therefore, we have boldness to draw near by the blood of Christ. The remission is obtained, here is proof the second. Oh believer, what springs of comfort are there here for thee.

And now let me commend this remission by the shedding of blood to those who have not yet believed. Mr. Innis, a great Scotch minister, once visited an infidel who was dying. When he came to him the first time, he said, "Mr. Innis, I am relying on the mercy of God; God is merciful, and he will never damn a man for ever." When he got worse and was nearer death, Mr. Innis went to him again, and he said, "Oh! Mr. Innis, my hope is gone; for I have been thinking if God be merciful, God is just too; and what if, instead of being merciful to me, he should be just to me? What would then become of me? I must give up my hope in the mere mercy of God; tell me how to be saved!" Mr. Innis told him that Christ had died in the stead of all believers—that God could be just, and yet the justifier through the death of Christ. "Ah!" said he, "Mr. Innis, there is something solid in that; I can rest on that; I cannot rest on anything else;" and it is a remarkable fact that none of us ever met with a man who thought he had his sins forgiven unless it was through the blood of Christ. Meet a Mussulman; he never had his sins forgiven; he does not say so. Meet an Infidel; he never knows that his sins are forgiven. Meet a Legalist; he says, "I hope they will be forgiven;" but he does not pretend they are. No one ever gets even a fancied hope apart from this, that Christ, and Christ alone, must save by the shedding of his blood.

Let me tell a story to show how Christ saves souls. Mr. Whitfield had a brother who had been like him, an earnest Christian, but he had backslidden; he went far from the ways of godliness; and one afternoon, after he had been recovered from his backsliding, he was sitting in a room in a chapel house. He had heard his brother preaching the day before, and his poor conscience had been cut to the very quick. Said Whitfield's brother, when he was at tea, "I am a lost man," and he groaned and cried, and could neither eat nor drink. Said Lady Huntingdon, who sat opposite, "What did you say, Mr. Whitfield?" "Madam," said he, "I said, I am a lost man." "I'm glad of it," said she; "I'm glad of it." "Your ladyship, how can you say so? It is cruel to say you are glad that I am a lost man." "I repeat it, sir," said she; "I am heartily glad of it." He looked at her, more and more astonished at her barbarity. "I am glad of it," said she, "because it is written, 'The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.'" With the tears rolling down his cheeks, he said, "What a precious Scripture; and how is it that it comes with such force to me? Oh! madam," said he, "madam, I bless God for that; then he will save me; I trust my soul in his hands; he has forgiven me." He went outside the house, felt ill, fell upon the ground, and expired. I may have a lost man here this morning. As I cannot say much, I will leave you, good people; you do not want anything.

Have I got a lost man here? Lost man! Lost woman! Where are you? Do you feel yourself to be lost? I am so glad of it; for there is remission by the blood-shedding. O sinner, are there tears in your eyes? Look through them. Do you see that man in the garden? That man sweats drops of blood for you. Do you see that man on the cross? That man was nailed there for you. Oh! if I could be nailed on a cross this morning for you all, I know what you would do: you would fall down and kiss my feet, and weep that I should have to die for you. But sinner, lost sinner, Jesus died for you—for you; and if he died for you., you cannot be lost. Christ died in vain for no one. Are you, then, a sinner? Are you convinced of sin because you believe not in Christ? I have authority to preach to you. Believe in his name and you cannot be lost. Do you say you are no sinner? Then I do not know that Christ died for you. Do you say that you have no sins to repent of? Then I have no Christ to preach to you. He did not come to save the righteous; he came to save the wicked. Are you wicked? Do you feel it? Are you lost? Do you know it? Are you sinful? Will you confess it? Sinner! if Jesus were here this morning, he would put out his bleeding hands, and say, "Sinner, I died for you, will you believe me?" He is not here in person; he has sent his servant to tell you. Won't you believe him? "Oh!" but you say, "I am such a sinner;" "Ah!" says he, "that is just why I died for you, because you are a sinner." "But," you say, "I do not deserve it." "Ah!" says he, "that is just why I did it." Say you, "I have hated him." "But," says he, "I have always loved you." "But, Lord, I have spat on thy minister, and scorned thy word." "It is all forgiven," says he, "all washed away by the blood which did run from my side. Only believe me; that is all I ask. And that I will give you. I will help you to believe." "Ah!" says one, "but I do not

want a Saviour." Sir, I have nothing to say to you except this—"The wrath to come! the wrath to come!" But there is one who says, "Sir, you do not mean what you say! Do you mean to preach to the most wicked men or women in the place?" I mean what I say. There she is! She is a harlot, she has led many into sin, and many into hell, There she is; her own friends have turned her out of doors; her father called her a good-for-nothing hussey, and said she should never come to the house again. Woman I dost thou repent? Dost thou feel thyself to be guilty? Christ died to save thee, and thou shalt be saved. There he is. I can see him. He was drunk; he has been drunk very often. Not many nights ago I heard his voice in the street, as he went home at a late hour on Saturday night, disturbing everybody; and he beat his wife, too. He has broken the Sabbath; and as to swearing, if oaths be like soot, his throat must want sweeping bad enough, for he has cursed God often. Do you feel yourself to be guilty, my hearer? Do you hate your sins, and are you willing to forsake them? Then I bless God for you. Christ died for you. Believe! I had a letter a few days ago, from a young man who heard that during this week I was going to a certain town. Said he, "Sir, when you come, do preach a sermon that will fit me; for do you know, sir, I have heard it said that we must all think ourselves to be the wickedest people in the world, or else we cannot be saved. I try to think so, but I cannot, because I have not been the wickedest. I want to think so, but I cannot. I want to be saved, but I do not know how to repent enough." Now, if I have the pleasure of seeing him, I shall tell him, God does not require a man to think himself the wickedest in the world, because that would sometimes be to think a falsehood; there are some men who are not so wicked as others are. What God requires is this, that a man should say, "I know more of myself than I do of other people; I know little about them, and from what I see of myself, not of my actions, but of my heart, I do think there can be few worse than I am. They may be more guilty openly, but then I have had more light, more privileges, more opportunities, more warnings, and therefore I am still guiltier." I do not want you to bring your brother with you, and say, "I am more wicked than he is;" I want you to come yourself, and say, "Father, I have sinned;" you have nothing to do with your brother William, whether he has sinned more or less; your cry should be, "Father, I have sinned;" you have nothing to do with your cousin Jane, whether or not she has rebelled more than you. Your business is to cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner!" That is all. Do you feel yourselves lost? Again, I say,—

"Come, and welcome, sinner, come!"

To conclude. There is not a sinner in this place who knows himself to be lost and ruined, who may not have all his sins forgiven, and "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." You may, though black as hell, be white as heaven this very instant. I know 'tis only by a desperate struggle that faith takes hold of the promise, but the very moment a sinner believes, that conflict is past. It is his first victory, and a blessed one. Let this verse be the language of your heart; adopt it, and make it your own:

“A guilty weak, and helpless worm.
In Christ’s kind arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”

Rahab's Faith

A Sermon

(No. 119)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 1, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”—[Hebrews 11:31](#).

IN ALMOST every capital of Europe there are varieties of triumphal arches or columns, upon which are recorded the valiant deeds of the country's generals, its emperors, or its monarchs. You will find, in one case, the thousand battles of a Napoleon recorded, and in another, you find the victories of a Nelson pictured. It seems, therefore, but right, that faith, which is the mightiest of the mighty, should have a pillar raised to its honor, upon which its valiant deeds should be recorded. The apostle Paul undertook to raise the structure, and he erected a most magnificent pillar in the chapter before us. It recites the victories of faith. It begins with one triumph of faith, and then proceeds to others. We have, in one place, faith triumphing over *death*; Enoch entered not the gates of hades, but reached heaven by another road from that which is usual to men. We have faith, in another place, wresting with *time*; Noah, warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, wrestled with time, which placed his deluge a hundred and twenty years away; and yet, in the confidence of faith, he believed against all rational expectation, against all probability, and his faith was more than a match for probability and time too. We have faith triumphing over *infirmity*—Abraham begetteth a son in his old age. And then we have faith triumphing over *natural affection*, as we see Abraham climbing to the top of the hill and raising the knife to slay his only and beloved son at the command of God. We see faith, again, entering the lists with the infirmities of *old age* and the pains of the last struggle, as we read, “By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.” Then we have faith combating the allurements of a wealthy court. “By faith Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” We see faith dauntless in courage when Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, and equally patient in suffering when he endured as seeing him who is invisible. We have faith dividing seas, and casting down strong walls. And then, as though the greatest victory should be recorded last, we have faith entering the lists with sin, holding a tournament with iniquity, and coming off more than a conqueror. “Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” That this woman was no mere hostess, but a real harlot, I have abundantly proved to every candid hearer while reading the chapter. I am persuaded

that nothing but a spirit of distaste for free grace would ever have led any commentator to deny her sin.

I do think this triumph of faith over sin is not the least here recorded, but that if there be any superiority ascribable to any one of faith's exploits, this is, in some sense, the greatest of all. What! faith, didst thou fight with hideous lust? What! wouldst thou struggle with the fiery passion which sendeth forth flame from human breasts? What! wouldst thou touch with thy hallowed fingers foul and bestial debauchery? "Yea," says faith, "I did encounter this abomination of iniquity; I delivered this woman from the loathsome chambers of vice, the wily snares of enchantment, and the fearful penalty of transgression; yea, I brought her off saved and rescued, gave her purity of heart, and renewed in her the beauty of holiness; and now her name shall be recorded in the roll of my triumphs as a woman full of sin, yet saved by faith."

I shall have some things to say this morning concerning this notable victory of faith over sin, such as I think will lead you to see that this was indeed a supereminent triumph of faith. I will make my divisions alliterative, that you may recollect them. This woman's faith was *saving faith*, *singular faith*, *stable faith*, *self-denying faith*, *sympathising faith*, and *sanctifying faith*. Let no one run away, when I shall have expounded the first point, and miss the rest, for you can not apprehend the whole power of her faith unless you remember each of those particulars I am about to mention.

I. In the first place, this woman's faith was SAVING FAITH. All the other persons mentioned here were doubtless saved by faith; but I do not find it specially remarked concerning any of them that they perished not through their faith; while it is particularly said of this woman, that she was delivered amid the general destruction of Jericho purely and only through her faith. And, without doubt, her salvation was not merely of a temporal nature, not merely a deliverance of her body from the sword, but redemption of her soul from hell. O! what a mighty thing faith is, when it saves the soul from going down to the pit! So mighty is the ever-rushing torrent of sin, that no arm but that which is as strong as Deity can ever stop the sinner from being hurried down to the gulf of black despair, and, when nearing that gulf, so impetuous is the torrent of divine wrath, that nothing can snatch the soul from perdition but an atonement which is as divine as God himself. Yet faith is the instrument of accomplishing the whole work. It delivers the sinner from the stream of sin, and so, laying hold upon the omnipotence of the Spirit, it rescues him from that great whirlpool of destruction into which his soul was being hurried. What a great thing it is to save a soul! You can never know how great it is unless you have stood in the capacity of a saviour to other men. You heroic man who, yesterday, when the house was burning, climbed the creaking stair-case, and, almost suffocated by the smoke, entered an upper chamber, snatched a babe from its bed and a woman from the window, bore them both down in his arms, and saved them at the peril of his own life, *he* can tell you what a great thing it is to

save a fellow-creature. Yon noble-hearted youth who, yesterday, sprang into the river, at the hazard of himself, and snatched a drowning man from death, he felt, when he stood upon the shore, what a great thing it was to save life. Ah! but you can not tell what a great thing it is to save a soul. It is only our Lord Jesus Christ who can tell you that, for he is the only one who has ever been the Saviour of sinners. And remember, you can only know how great a thing faith is by knowing the infinite value of the salvation of a soul. "Now, by faith, the harlot Rahab was delivered." That she was really saved in a gospel sense as well as temporally, seems to me to be proved from her reception of the spies which was an emblem of the entrance of the word into her heart, and her hanging out of the scarlet thread was an evidence of faith, not unaptly picturing faith in the blood of Jesus the Redeemer. But who can measure the length and breadth of that word—*salvation*. Ah! it was a mighty deed which faith accomplished when he bore her off in safety. Poor sinner! take comfort. The same faith which saved Rahab can save thee. Art thou literally one of Rahab's sisters in guilt? She was saved, and so mayest thou be, if God shall grant thee repentance. Woman! art thou loathsome to thyself? Dost thou stand at this moment in this assembly, and say, "I am ashamed to be here; I know I have no right to stand among people who are chaste and honest?" I bid thee still remain; yea, come again and make this thy Sabbath house of prayer. Thou art no intruder! Thou art welcome! For thou hast a sacred right to the courts of mercy. Thou hast a sacred right; for here *sinners* are invited, and thou art such. Believe in Christ, and thou, like Rahab, shalt not perish with the disobedient, but even thou shalt be saved.

And now there is some gentleman in the audience who says, "There's a gospel for you; it is a kind of sanctuary for wicked men, unto which the worst of people may run and be saved." Yes, that is the stale objection which Celsus used against Oigen in his discussion. "But," said Origen, "it is true, Celsus, that Christ's gospel is a sanctuary for thieves, robbers, murderers, and harlots. But know this, it is not a sanctuary merely, it is an hospital too; for it heals their sins, delivers them from their diseases, and they are not afterwards what they were before they received the gospel." I ask no man to-day to come to Christ, and then continue his sins. If so, I should ask him to do an absurdity. As well might I talk of delivering a Prometheus, while his chains are allowed to remain upon him and bind him to his rock. It can not be. Christ taketh away the vulture from the conscience, but he taketh away the chains too, and maketh the man wholly free when he doeth it all. Yet, we repeat it again, the chief of sinners are as welcome to Christ as the best of saints. The fountain filled with blood was opened for black ones; the robe of Christ was woven for naked ones; the balm of Calvary was compounded for sick ones; life came into the world to raise the dead. And O! ye perishing and guilty souls, may God give you Rahab's faith, and you shall have this salvation, and shall with her stand yonder, where the white-robed spotless hosts sing unending hallelujah to God and the Lamb.

II. But mark, Rahab's faith was a SINGULAR FAITH. The city of Jericho was about to be attacked; within its walls there were hosts of people of all classes and characters, and they knew right well that if their city should be sacked and stormed they would all be put to death; but yet, strange to say, there was not one of them who repented of sin, or who even asked for mercy, except this woman who had been a harlot. She, and she alone was delivered, a solitary one among a multitude. Now, have you ever felt that it is a very hard thing to have a singular faith? It is the easiest thing in the world to believe as every body else believes, but the difficulty is to believe a thing alone, when no one else thinks as you think; to be the solitary champion of a righteous cause when the enemy mustereth his thousands to the battle. Now, this was the faith of Rahab. She had not one who felt as she did, who could enter into her feelings and realize the value of her faith. She stood alone. O! it is a noble thing to be the lonely follower of despised truth. There be some who could tell you a tale of standing up alone. There have been days when the world poured continually a river of infamy and calumny upset them, but they stemmed the torrent, and, by continued grace, made strong in weakness, they held their own until the current turned, and they, in their success, were praised and applauded by the very men who sneered before. Then did the world accord them the name of "great." But where lay their greatness? Why, in this, that they stood as firm in the storm as they stood in the calm—that they were as content to serve God alone as they were to run by fifties. To be good we must be singular. Christians must swim against the stream. Dead fish always float down the stream, but the living fish forces its way against the current. Now, worldly religious men will go just as every body else goes. That is nothing. The thing is to stand alone. Like Elijah, when he said, "I only am left and they seek my life;" to feel in one's self that we believe as firmly as if a thousand witnesses stood up by our side. O! there is no great right in a man, no strong-minded right, unless he dares to be singular. Why, the most of you are as afraid as you ever can be to go out of the fashions, and you spend more money than you ought because you think you must be respectable. You dare not move in opposition to your brethren and sisters in the circle in which you move; and therefore you involve yourselves in difficulties. You are blindfolded by the rich fabric of fashion, and therefore many a wrong thing is tolerated because it is customary. But a strong-minded man is one who does not try to be singular, but who *dares* to be singular, when he knows that to be singular is to be right. Now, Rahab's faith, sinner as she was, had this glory, this crown about its head, that she stood alone, faithful among the faithless found."

And why should not God vouchsafe the same faith to thee, my poor, sinning, but contrite hearer? You live in a back street, in a house which contains none but Sabbath breakers, and irreligious men and women. But if you have grace in your heart you will dare to do right. You belong to an infidel club; if you should make them a speech after your own conscience, they would hiss you; and if you forsook their company, they would persecute you. Go and try them. Dare them. See, whether you can do it; for if you are afraid of men, you are taken

in a snare which *may prove your grief and is now your sin*. Mark you, the chief of sinners can make the most daring of saints; the worst men in the devil's army, when they are converted, make the truest soldiers for Jesus. The forlorn hope of Christendom has generally been led by men who have proved the high efficacy of grace to an eminent degree by having been saved from the deepest sins. Go on, and the Lord give you that high and singular faith!

III. Furthermore, this woman's faith was A STABLE FAITH, which stood firm in the midst of trouble, I have heard of a church clergyman who was once waited upon by his church warden, after a long time of drought, and was requested to put up the prayer for rain. "Well," said he, "my good man, I will offer it, but it's not a bit of use while the wind is in the east, I'm sure." There are many who have that kind of faith: they believe just so far as probabilities go with them, but when the promise and the probability part, then they follow the probability and part with the promise. They say, "The thing is likely, therefore I believe it." But that is no faith, it is sight. True faith exclaims, "The thing is unlikely, yet I believe it." This is real faith. Faith is to say, that "mountains, when in darkness hidden, are as real as in day." Faith is to look through that cloud, not with the eye of sight, which seeth naught, but with the eye of faith, which seeth every thing, and to say, "I trust him when I can not trace him; I tread the sea as firmly as I would the rock; I walk as securely in the tempest as in the sunshine, and lay myself to rest upon the surging billows of the ocean as contentedly as upon my bed." The faith of Rahab was the right sort of faith, for it was firm and enduring.

I will just have a little talk with Rahab this morning, as I suppose old Unbelief did commune with her. Now, my good woman, don't you see the absurdity of this thing? Why, the people of Israel are on the other side of Jordan, and there is no bridge: how are they to get over? Of course they must go up higher toward the fords; and then Jericho will be for a long time secure. They will take other cities before coming to Jericho; and, besides, the Canaanites are mighty, and the Israelites are only a parcel of slaves; they will soon be cut in pieces, and there will be an end of them; therefore, do not harbor these spies. Why put your life in jeopardy for such an improbability? "Ah," says she, "I do not care about the Jordan; my faith can believe across the Jordan, or else it were only a dry-land faith." By-and-by, they march through the Jordan dry shod, and then Faith gets firmer confidence. "Ah!" says she, secretly within herself, what she would willingly have said to her neighbors, "will you not now believe? will you not now sue for mercy?" "No," they say; "the walls of Jericho are strong; can the feeble host resist us? And lo on the morrow the troops are out, and what do they do? They simply blow a number of rams' horns; her neighbors say, "Why, Rahab, you do not mean to say you believe now? They are mad." The people just go round the city, and all hold their tongues, except the few priests blowing rams' horns. "Why, it is ridiculous. It were quite a new thing in warfare to hear of men taking a city by blowing rams' horns." That was the first day; probably the next day Rahab thought they would come with scaling-ladders and mount the walls; but no, rams' horns again, up to the seventh day; and this

woman kept the scarlet thread in the window all the time, kept her father and mother, and brothers and sisters in the house, and would not let them go out; and on the seventh day, when the people made a great shout, the wall of the city fell flat to the ground; but her faith overcame her womanly timidity, and she remained within, although the wall was tumbling to the ground. Rahab's house stood alone upon the wall, a solitary fragment amid a universal wreck, and she and her household were all saved. Now would you have thought that such a rich plant would grow in such poor soil—that strong faith could grow in such a sinful heart as that of Rahab? Ah! but here it is that God exercises his great husbandry. "My Father is the husbandman," said Christ. Any husbandman can get a good crop out of good soil; but God is the husbandman who can grow cedars on rocks, who can not only put the hyssop upon the wall, but put the oak there too, and make the greatest faith spring up in the most unlikely position. All glory to his grace! the great sinner may become great in faith. "Be of good cheer, then, sinner! If Christ should make thee repent, thou hast no need to think that thou shalt be the least in the family. O! no; thy name may yet be written among the mightiest of the mighty, and thou mayest stand as a memorable and triumphant instance of the power of faith.

IV. This woman's faith was A SELF-DENYING FAITH. She dared to risk her life for the sake of the spies. She knew that if they were found in her house she would be put to death; but though she was so weak as to do a sinful deed to preserve them, yet she was so *strong* that she would run the risk of being put to death to save these two men. It is something to be able to deny ourselves. An American once said, "I have got a good religion; it's the right sort of religion; I do not know that it costs me a cent a year; and yet I believe I am as truly a religious man as anybody." "Ah!" said one who heard it, "the Lord have mercy on your miserable stingy soul, for if you had been saved you would not have been content with a cent a year"—a halfpenny per annum! I hazard this assertion, that there is nothing in the faith of that man who does not exercise self-denial. If we never give any thing to Christ's cause, work for Christ, deny ourselves for Christ, the root of the matter is not in us. I might call some of you hypocrites: you sing,

 "And if I might make some reserve,
 And duty did not call,
 I love my God with zeal so great,
 That I could give him all."

Yes, *but you would not, though*; you know better than that, for you do not, as it is, give all, no, nor yet half, nor yet the thousandth part. I suppose you think you are *poor* yourselves, though you have got some thousand pounds odd a year, and so you keep it yourself, under the notion that "he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." I don't know how else it is you make your religion square with itself, and be at all consistent. This woman said, "If I must die for these men, I will; I am prepared, bad name as I have, to have a worse name still;

as a traitor to my country I am prepared to be handed down to infamy, if it be necessary, for having betrayed my country in taking in these spies, for I know it is God's will it should be done, and do it I will at every hazard. "O men and brethren, trust not your faith, unless it has self-denial with it. Faith and self-denial, like the Siamese twins, are born together, and must live together, and the food that nourisheth one must nourish both. But this woman, poor sinner as she was, would deny herself. She brought her life, even as that other woman, who was a sinner, brought the alabaster box of precious ointment, and broke it on the head of Christ.

V. Not to detain you too long, another point very briefly. This woman's faith was A SYMPATHISING FAITH. She did not believe for herself only; she desired mercy for her relations, Said she, "I want to be saved, but that very desire makes me want to have my father saved, and my mother saved, and my brother saved, and my sister saved." I know a man who walks seven miles every Sabbath to hear the gospel preached in a certain place—a place where they preach *the* gospel. You know that very particular, superfine sort—the gospel, a gospel, the spirit of which consists in bad temper, carnal security, arrogance, and a seared conscience. But this man was one day met by a friend, who said to him, "Where is your wife?" "*Wife?*" said he to him. "What! does she not come with you?" "O! no", said the man; "she never goes anywhere." "Well, but," said he, "don't you try to get her to go, and the children?" "No; the fact of it is, I think, if I look to myself that is quite enough." "Well," said the other, "and you believe that you are God's elect, do you?" "Yes." "Well, then," said the other, "I don't think you are, because you are worse than a heathen man and a publican, for you don't care for your own household; therefore I don't think you give much evidence of being God's elect, for they love their fellow-creatures." So sure as our faith is real, it will want to bring others in. You will say, "You want to make proselytes." Yes; and you will reply, that Christ said to the Pharisees, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte." Yes, and Christ did not find fault with them for doing so; what he found fault with them for was this—"When ye have found him ye make him tenfold more the child of hell than yourselves."

The spirit of proselyting is the spirit of Christianity, and we ought to be desirous of possessing it. If any man will say, "I believe such and such a thing is true, but I do not wish any one else to believe it, I will tell you, it is a lie; he does not believe it, for it is impossible, heartily and really to believe a thing, without desiring to make others believe the same. And I am sure of this, moreover, it is impossible to know the value of salvation without desiring to see others brought in. Said that renowned preacher, Whitefield, "As soon as I was converted, I wanted to be the means of the conversion of all that I had ever known. There were a number of young men that I had played cards with, that I had sinned with, and transgressed with: the first thing I did was, to go to their houses to see what I could do for their salvation, nor could I rest until I had the pleasure of seeing many of them brought to the Saviour." This is a first-fruit of the Spirit. It is a kind of instinct in a young Christian. He must have

other people feel what he feels. Says one young man, in writing to me this week, "I have been praying for my fellow-clerk in the office; I have desired that he might be brought to the Saviour, but at present there is no answer to my prayers." Do not give a penny for that man's piety which will not spread itself. Unless we desire others to taste the benefits we have enjoyed, we are either inhuman monsters or outrageous hypocrites; I think the last is most likely. But this woman was so strong in faith that all her family were saved from destruction. Young woman! you have a father, and he hates the Saviour. O! pray for him. Mother! you have a son: he scoffs at Christ. Cry out to God for him. Ay, my friends—young people like myself—we little know what we owe to the prayers of our parents. I feel that I shall never be able sufficiently to bless God for a praying mother. I thought it was a great nuisance to be had in at such a time to pray, and more especially to be made to cry, as my mother used to make me cry. I would have laughed at the idea of any body else talking to me about these things; but when she prayed, and said, "Lord, save my son Charles," and then was overcome, and could not get any further for crying, you could not help crying too; you could not help feeling; it was of no use trying to stand against it. Ah! and there you are young man! Your mother is dying, and one thing which makes her death-bed bitter is, that you scoff God and hate Christ. O! it is the last stage of impiety, when a man can think lightly of a mother's feelings. I would hope there are none such here, but that those of you who have been so blessed, as to have been begotten and brought forth by pious men and women may take this into consideration—that to perish with a mother's prayers is to perish fearfully; for if a mother's prayers do not bring us to Christ, they are like drops of oil dropped into the flames of hell that will make them burn more fiercely upon the soul for ever and ever. Take heed of rushing to perdition over your mother's prayers!

There is an old woman weeping—do you know why? I believe she has sons too, and she loves them. I met with a little incident in company, the other day, after preaching. There was a little boy at the corner of the table, and his father asked him, "Why does your father love you, John?" Said the dear little lad, very prettily, "Because I'm a good boy." "Yes," said the father, "he would not love you if you were not a good boy." I turned to the good father and remarked that I was not quite sure about the truth of the last remark, for I believed he would love him if he were ever so bad. "Well," he said, "I think I should." And said a minister at the table, "I had an instance of that yesterday. I stepped into the house of a woman who had a son transported for life, and she was as full of her son Richard as if he had been prime minister, or had been her most faithful and dutiful son." Well, young man, will you kick against love like that—love that will bear your kicks, and will not turn round against you, but love you straight on still? But perhaps that woman—I saw her weep just now—had a mother, who has gone long ago, and she was married to a brutal husband, and at last left a poor widow; she calls to mind the days of her childhood, when the big Bible was brought out and read around the hearth, and "Our Father which art in heaven" was their nightly

prayer. Now, perhaps, God is beginning some good thing in her heart. O! that he would bring her now, though seventy years of age, to love the Saviour! Then would she have the beginning of life over again in her last days, which will be made her best days.

VI. One more head, and then we have done. Rahab's faith was a SANCTIFYING FAITH. Did Rahab continue a harlot after she had faith? No, no, she did not. I do not believe she was a harlot at the time the men went to her house, though the name still stuck to her, as such ill names will; but I am sure she was not afterward, for Salmon the prince of Judah married her, and her name is put down among the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ. She became after that a woman eminent for piety walking in the fear of God. Now, you may have a dead faith which will ruin your soul. The faith that will save you is a faith which sanctifies. "Ah!" says the drunkard, "I like the gospel, sir; I believe in Christ;" then he will go over to the Blue Lion to-night, and get drunk. Sir, that is not the believing in Christ that is of any use. "Yes," says another, "I believe in Christ;" and when he gets outside he will begin to talk lightly, frothy words, perhaps lascivious ones, and sin as before. Sir, you speak falsely; you do not believe in Christ. That faith which saves the soul is a real faith, and a real faith sanctifies men. It makes them say, "Lord, thou hast forgiven me my sins; I will sin no more. Thou hast been so merciful to me, I will renounce my guilt; so kindly hast thou treated me, so lovingly hast thou embraced me, Lord, I will serve thee till I die; and if thou wilt give me grace, and help me so to be, I will be as holy as thou art." You can not have faith, and yet live in sin. To believe is to be holy. The two things must go together. That faith is a dead faith, a corrupt faith, which lives in sin that grace may abound. Rahab was a sanctified woman. O that God might sanctify some that are here! The world has been trying all manner of processes to reform men: there is but one thing that ever will reform them, and that is, faith in the preached gospel. But in this age preaching is much despised. You read the newspaper you read the book; you hear the lecturer; you sit and listen to the pretty essayist; but where is the preacher? Preaching is not taking out a manuscript sermon, asking God to direct your heart, and then reading pages prepared beforehand. That is reading—not preaching. There is a good tale told of an old man whose minister used to read. The minister called to see him, and said, "What are you doing John?" "Why, I'm prophesying, sir." "Prophesying; how is that? You mean you are reading the prophecies?" "No, I don't; I'm prophesying; for you read preaching, and call it preaching, and I read prophecies, and, on the same rule, that is prophesying." And the man was not far from right. We want to have more outspoken, downright utterances of truth and appeals to the conscience, and until we get these, we shall never see any very great and lasting reforms. But by the preaching of God's word, foolishness though it seem to some, harlots are reformed, thieves are made honest, and the worst of men brought to the Saviour. Again let me affectionately give the invitation to the vilest of men, if so they feel themselves to be,

"Come, ye needy, come and welcome,

God's fine bounty glorify:
True belief and true repentance—
Every grace that brings us nigh—
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”

Your sins will be forgiven, your transgressions cast away, and you shall henceforth go and sin no more, God having renewed you, and he will keep you even to the end. May God give his blessing, for Jesus sake! Amen.

A Faithful Friend

A Sermon

(No. 120)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 8, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”—[Proverbs 18:24](#).

CICERO has well said, “Friendship is the only thing in the world concerning the usefulness of which all mankind are agreed.” Friendship seems as necessary an element of a comfortable existence in this world as fire or water, or even air itself. A man may drag along a miserable existence in proud solitary dignity, but his life is scarce life, it is nothing but an existence, the tree of life being stripped of the leaves of hope and the fruits of joy. He who would be happy here must have friends; and he who would be happy hereafter, must, above all things, find a friend in the world to come, in the person of God, the Father of his people.

Friendship, however, though very pleasing and exceedingly blessed, has been the cause of the greatest misery to men when it has been unworthy and unfaithful; for just in proportion as a good friend is sweet, a false friend is full of bitterness. “A faithless friend is sharper than an adder’s tooth.” It is sweet to repose in some one; but O! how bitter to have that support snapped, and to receive a grievous fall as the effect of your confidence. Fidelity is an absolute necessary in a true friend; we can not rejoice in men unless they will stand faithful to us. Solomon declares that “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” That friend, I suppose, he never found in the pomps and vanities of the world. He had tried them all, but he found them empty; he passed through all their joys, but he found them “vanity of vanities.” Poor Savage spoke from sad experience when he said—

“You’ll find the friendship of the world a show!

Mere outward show! ‘Tis like the harlot’s tears,

The statesman’s promise, or false patriot’s zeal,

Full of fair seeming, but delusion all.”

And so for the most part they are. The world’s friendship is ever brittle. Trust to it, and you have trusted a robber; rely upon it, and you have leaned upon a thorn; ay, worse than that, upon a spear which shall pierce you to the soul with agony. Yet Solomon says he had found “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Not in the haunts of his unbridled pleasures, nor in the wanderings of his unlimited resources, but in the pavilion of the Most High, the secret dwelling-place of God, in the person of Jesus, the Son of God, the Friend of sinners.

It is saying a great thing to affirm that “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;” for the love of brotherhood has produced most valiant deeds. We have read stories

of what brotherhood could do, which, we think, could hardly be excelled in the annals of friendship. Timoleon, with his shield, stood over the body of his slain brother, to defend him from the insults of the foe. It was reckoned a brave deed of brotherhood that he should dare the spears of an army in defense of his brother's corpse. And many such instances have there been, in ancient and modern warfare, of the attachment of brethren. There is a story told of a Highland regiment, who, while marching through the Highlands, lost their way; they were overtaken by one of the terrible storms which will sometimes come upon travelers unawares, and blinded by the snow, they lost their way upon the mountains. Well nigh frozen to death, it was with difficulty they could continue their march. One man after another dropped into the snow and disappeared. There were two brothers, however, of the name of Forsythe; one of them fell prostrate on the earth, and would have lain there to die, but his brother, though barely able to drag his own limbs across the white desert, took him on his back, and carried him along, and as others fell one by one, this brave, true-hearted brother carried his loved one on his back, until at last he himself fell down overcome with fatigue, and died. His brother, however, had received such warmth from his body that he was enabled to reach the end of his journey in safety, and so lived. Here we have an instance of one brother sacrificing his life for another. I hope there are some brothers here who would be prepared to do the same if they should ever be brought into the same difficulty. It is saying a great thing, to declare that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." It is putting that friend first of all in the list of loving ones; for, surely, next to a mother's love, there is, and there ought to be, no higher affection in the world than the love of a brother to one begotten of the same father, and dandled on the same knee. Those who have "grown in beauty side by side, and filled one house with glee," ought to love one another. And we think there have been many glorious instances and mighty proofs of the love of brethren. Yet, says Solomon, "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

To repeat our assertion, we believe that this friend is the blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It shall be ours, first, *to prove*, this morning, *the fact* that he sticks closer than a brother; then, as briefly as we can, to show you *why he sticks closer than a brother*; and then to finish up by giving you *some lessons which may be drawn from the doctrine*, that Jesus Christ is a faithful Friend.

I. First, then, beloved, we assert that CHRIST IS "A FRIEND THAT STICKETH CLOSER THAN A BROTHER." And in order to prove this from facts, we appeal to such of you as have had him for a friend. Will you not, each of you, at once give your verdict, that this is neither more nor less than an unexaggerated truth? He loved you before all worlds; long ere the day star flung his ray across the darkness, before the wing of angel had flapped the unnavigated ether, before aught of creation had struggled from the womb of nothingness, God, even our God, had set his heart upon all his children. Since that time, has he once swerved, has he once turned aside, once changed? No; ye who have tasted of his love and

know his grace, will bear me witness, that he has been a certain friend in uncertain circumstances.

“He, near your side hath always stood.

His loving-kindness. O! how good.”

You fell in Adam; did he cease to love you? No; he became the second Adam to redeem you. You sinned in practice, and brought upon your head the condemnation of God; you deserved his wrath and his utter anger; did he then forsake you? No!

“He saw you ruined in the fall,

Yet loved you notwithstanding all.”

He sent his minister after you; you despised him; he preached the gospel in your ears; you laughed at him; you broke God’s Sabbath, you despised his Word. Did he then forsake you? No!

“Determined to save, he watched o’er your path,

Whilst, Satan’s blind slave, you sported with death.”

And at last he arrested you by his grace, he humbled you, he made you penitent, he brought you to his feet, and he forgave you all your sins. Since then, has he left you? You have often left him; has he ever left you? You have had many trials and troubles; has he ever deserted you? Has he ever turned away his heart, and shut up his bowels of compassion? No, children of God, it is your solemn duty to say “No,” and bear witness to his faithfulness. You have been in severe afflictions and in dangerous circumstances; did your friend desert you then? Others have been faithless to you; he that eat bread with you has lifted up his heel against you; but has Christ ever forsaken you? Has there ever been a moment when you could go to him, and say, “Master, thou hast betrayed me?” Could you once, in the blackest hour of your grief, dare to impugn his fidelity? Could you dare to say of him, “Lord, thou hast promised what thou didst not perform?” Will you not bear witness now, “Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised; all hath come to pass?” And do you fear he will yet forsake you? Ask, then, the bright ones before the throne—“Ye glorified spirits! did Christ forsake you? Ye have passed through Jordan’s stream; did he leave you there? Ye have been baptized in the black flood of death; did he there forsake you? Ye have stood before the throne of God; did he then deny you?” And they answered, “No; through all the troubles of our life, in all the bitterness of death, in all the agonies of our expiring moments, and in all the terrors of God’s judgment, he hath been with us, ‘a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.’” Out of all the millions of God’s redeemed, there is not one he hath forsaken. Poor they have been, mean and distressed, but he hath never abhorred their prayer, never turned aside from doing them good. He hath been ever with them.

“For his mercy shall endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure.”

But I shall not longer stay, since I can not prove this to the ungodly, and to the godly it is already proven, for they know it by experience; therefore it is but little necessary that I should do more than just certify the fact that Christ is a faithful friend—a friend in every hour of need and every time of distress.

II. And now I have to tell you THE REASONS WHY WE MAY DEPEND UPON CHRIST AS BEING A FAITHFUL FRIEND.

There are some things in himself which render it certain that he will stick close to his people.

1. True friendship can only be made between true men. Hearts are the soul of honor. There can be no lasting friendship between bad men. Bad men may pretend to love each other, but their friendship is a rope of sand, which shall be broken at any convenient season; but if a man have a sincere heart within him, and be true and noble, then we may confide in him. Spenser sings in fine old English verse—

“No, certes can that friendship long endure,
However gay and goodly be the style,
That doth ill cause or evil end enure,
For Vertue is the band that bindeth Harts most sure.”

But who can find a stain in the character of Jesus, or who can tarnish his honor? Has there ever been a spot on his escutcheon? Has his flag ever been trampled in the dust? Does he not stand the true witness in heaven, the faithful and just? Is it not declared of him that he is God who can not lie? Have we not found him so up to this moment; and may we not, knowing that he is “Holy, holy, holy Lord,” confide in him, that he will stick closer to us than a brother? His goodness is the guaranty of his fidelity; he can not fail us.

2. *Faithfulness to us in our faults* is a certain sign of fidelity in a friend. You may depend upon that man who will tell you of your faults in a kind and considerate manner. Fawning hypocrites, insidious flatterers, are the sweepings and offal of friendship. They are but the parasites upon that noble tree. But true friends put enough trust in you to tell you openly of your faults. Give me for a friend the man who will speak honestly of me before my face; who will not tell first one neighbor, and then another, but who will come straight to my house, and say, “Sir, I feel there is such-and-such a thing in you, which, as my brother, I must tell you of.” That man is a true friend; he has proved himself to be so; for we never get any praise for telling people of their faults; we rather hazard their dislike; a man will sometimes thank you for it, but he does not often like you any the better. Praise is a thing we all love. I met with a man the other day who said he was impervious to flattery; I was walking with him at the time, and turning round rather sharply, I said, “At any rate, sir, you seem to have a high gift in flattering yourself, for you are really doing so, in saying you are impervious to flattery.” “You can not flatter me,” he said. I replied, “I can, if I like to try; and perhaps may do so before the day is out.” I found I could not flatter him directly, so I began by

saying what a fine child that was of his; and he drank it in as a precious draught; and when I praised this thing and that thing belonging to him, I could see that he was very easily flattered; not directly, but indirectly. We are all pervious to flattery; we like the soothing cordial, only it must not be labeled flattery; for we have a religious abhorrence of flattery if it be so called; call it by any other name, and we drink it in, even as the ox drinketh in water. Now, child of God, has Christ every flattered you? Has he not told you of your faults right truly? Has he not pricked your conscience even upon what you thought to gloss over—your little secret sins? Has he not provoked conscience to thunder in your ears notes of terror, because of your misdeeds? Well, then, you may trust him, for he shows that faithfulness which renders a man right trustworthy. Thus I have pointed out to you that there are reasons in himself for which we may trust him.

3. In the next place, *there are some things in his friendship which render us sure of not being deceived, when we put our confidence in him.* True friendship must not be of hasty growth. As quaint old Master Fuller says: “Let friendship creep gently to a height; if it rush to it, it may soon run itself out of breath.” It is even so. I think it was Joanna Baillie said—

“Friendship is no plant of hasty growth.

Though planted in esteem’s deep fixed soil,

The gradual culture of kind intercourse

Must bring it to perfection.”

In vain thou trustest the gourd over thy head, O Jonah; it will not be of much use to thee; it came up in a night, it may wither in a night. It is the strong stiff oak, of ages’ growth, which shall abide the tempest; which shall alike put out its wings to shield thee from the sun, and shall afterward find thee a hovel in its heart, if necessary, in its gray old age, when its branches tremble in the blast. Friendship is true when it begins; but we must have a man’s friendship long before we can say of him, that he will stick closer than a brother. And how long has Christ loved you? That you can not tell. When the ages were not born he loved you; when this world was an infant, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of mist, he loved you; when the old pyramids had not begun to be builded, his heart was set upon you; and ever since you have been born he has had a strong affection for you. He looked on you in your cradle, and he loved you then; he was affianced to you when you were an infant of a span long, and he has loved you ever since. Some of you I see with gray hairs, some with heads all bald with age; he has loved you up till now, and will he now forsake you? O! no, his friendship is so old that it must last; it has been matured by so many tempests, it has been rooted by so many winds of trouble, that it can not but endure; it must stand. Even as the granite peak of the mountain shall not be melted, because, unlike the snow, it has braved the blast, and borne the heat of the burning sun; it has stood out always, catching in its face every blow from the face of nature, and yet been unmoved and uninjured. It shall last, for it has lasted. But when the elements shall melt, and in a stream of dissolving fire shall run

away, then shall Christ's friendship still exist, for it is of older growth than they. He must be "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" for his friendship is a hoary friendship—hoary as his own head, of which it is said, "His head and his hair are white like snow, as white as wool."

4. But note, further, the *friendship which lasts does not take it rise in the chambers of mirth, nor is it fed and fattened there*. Young lady, you speak of a dear friend whom you acquired last night in a ball-room. Do not, I beseech you, misuse the word; he is not a friend if he was acquired merely there; friends are better things than those which grow in the hot-house of pleasure. Friendship is a more lasting plant than those. You have a friend, have you? Yes; and he keeps a pair of horses, and has a good establishment. Ah! but your best way to prove your friend is to know that he will be your friend when you have not so much as a mean cottage, and when, houseless and without clothing, you are driven to beg your bread. Thus you would make true proof of a friend. Give me a friend who was born in the winter time, whose cradle was rocked in the storm; he will last. Our fair weather friends shall flee away from us. I had rather have a robin for a friend than a swallow; for a swallow abides with us only in the summer time, but a robin cometh to us in the winter. Those are tight friends that will come the nearest to us when we are in the most distress; but those are not friends who speed themselves away when ill times come. Believer, hast thou reason to fear that Christ will leave you now? Has he not been with you in the house of mourning? You found your friend where men find pearls, "in caverns deep, where darkness dwells;" you found Jesus in your hour of trouble. It was on the bed of sickness that you first learned the value of his name; it was in the hour of mental anguish that you first did lay hold of the hem of his garment; and since then, your nearest and sweetest intercourse has been held with him in the hours of darkness. Well, then, such a friend, proved in the house of sorrow—a friend who gave his heart's blood for you, and let his soul run out in one great river of gore—such a friend never can and never will forsake you; he sticketh closer than a brother.

5. Again, *a friend who is acquired by folly is never a lasting friend*. Do a foolish thing, and make a man your friend; 'tis but a confederacy in vice, and you will soon discover that his friendship is worthless; the friendship you acquire by doing wrong, you had better be without. O! how many silly friendships there are springing up, the mere fruit of a sentimentalism, having no root whatever, but like the plant of which our Saviour tells us, "It sprang up because it had no depth of earth." Jesus Christ's friendship is not like that; there is no ingredient of folly in it; he loves us discreetly, not winking or conniving at our follies, but instilling into us his wisdom. His love is wise; he hath chosen us according to the counsel of his wisdom; not blindly and rashly, but with all judgment and prudence.

Under this head I may like wise observe, that *the friendship of ignorance is not a very desirable one*. I desire no man to call himself my friend, if he doth not know me. Let him love me in proportion to his knowledge of me. If he loves me for the little he knows, when

he knoweth more he may cast me aside. "That man," says one, "seems to be a very amiable man." "I am sure I can love him," says another, as he scans his features. Ay, but do not write "friend" yet; wait a wee bit, until you know more of him; just see him, examine him, try him, test him, and not till then enter him on the sacred list of friends. Be friendly to all, but make none your friends until they know you, and you know them. Many a friendship born in the darkness of ignorance, hath died suddenly in the light of a better acquaintance with each other. You supposed men to be different from what they were, and when you discovered their real character you disregarded them. I remember one saying to me, "I have great affection for you, sir," and he mentioned a certain reason. I replied, "My dear fellow, your reason is absolutely false; the very thing you love me for, I am not, and hope I never shall be." And so I said, "I really can not accept your friendship, if it be founded upon a misunderstanding of what I may have said." But our Lord Jesus never can forsake those whom once he loves, because he can discover nothing in us worse than he knew, for he knew all about us beforehand. He saw our leprosy, and yet he loved us; he knew our deceitfulness and unbelief, and yet he did press us to his bosom; he knew what poor fools we were, and yet he said he would never leave us nor forsake us. He knew that we should rebel against him and despise his counsel often times; he knew that even when we loved him our love would be cold and languid, but he loved for his own sake. Surely, then, he will stick closer than a brother.

6. Yet again, *friendship and love, to be real, must not lie in words, but in deeds*. The friendship of bare compliment is the fashion of this age, because this age is the age of deceit. The world is the great house of sham. Go where you may in London, sham is staring you in the face; there are very few real things to be discovered. I allude not merely to tricks in business, adulterations in food, and such like. Deception is not confined to the tradesman's shop. It prevails throughout society; the sanctuary is not exempt. The preacher adopts a sham voice. You hardly ever hear a man speak in the pulpit in the same way he would speak in the parlor. Why, I hear my brethren, sometimes, when they are at tea or dinner, speak in a very comfortable decent sort of English voice, but when they get into their pulpits they adopt a sanctimonious tone, and fill their mouths with inflated utterance, or else whine most pitifully. They degrade the pulpit by pretending to honor it; speaking in a voice which God never intended any mortal to have. This is the great house of sham; and such little things show which way the wind blows. You leave your card at a friend's house; that is an act of friendship—the card! I wonder whether, if he were hard up for cash, you would leave your banker's book! You write "My dear sir," "Yours very truly;" it is a sham; you do not mean it. "Dear!" that is a sacred word; it ought to be used to none but those you regard with affection; but we tolerate falsehoods now, as if they were truths; and we call them courtesies. Courtesies they may be; but untruths they are in many cases. Now, Christ's love lieth not in words, but in deeds. He saith not, "My dear people;" but he let his heart out, and we could see what that was. He doth not come to us, and say, "Dearly beloved" simply; but he hangs

upon the cross, and there we read “Dearly beloved” in red letters. He does not come to us with the kisses of his lips first—he giveth us blessings with both his hands; he giveth himself *for* us, and then he giveth himself *to* us. Trust no complimentary friend; rely upon the man who giveth you real tokens worth your having, who does for you deeds to show the truthfulness of his heart. Such a friend—and such is Jesus—“sticketh closer than a brother.”

7. Once more, and I shall not weary you, I trust. *A purchased friend will never last long.* Give to a man nineteen times, and deny him the twentieth, and he shall hate you; for his love sprang only from your gifts. The love which I could buy for gold I would sell for dross; the friendship that I could buy for pearls I would dispense with for pebbles; it were of no value, and therefore the sooner lost the better. But O believer, Christ’s love was unpurchased love. Thou broughtest him no present. Jacob said, when his sons went to Egypt, “Take the man a present, a little oil, a little balm, a few nuts and almonds;” but you took Christ no presents. When you came to him you said,

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

You did not even promise that you would love him; for you had such a faithless heart, you durst not say so. You asked him to make you love him; that was the most you could do. He loved you for nothing at all—simply because he would love you. Well, that love which so lived on nothing but its own resources, will not starve through the scantiness of your returns; the love which grew in such a rocky heart as this, will not die for want of soil. That love which sprang up in the barren desert, in your unirrigated soul, will never, never die for want of moisture; it must live, it can not expire. Jesus must be “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

8. Shall I stay to urge more reasons? I may but mention one other, namely, this—that *there can not, by any possibility, arise any cause which could make Christ love us less.* You say, how is this? One man loves his friend, but he on a sudden grows rich, and now he says I am a greater man than I used to be, I forget my old acquaintances. But Christ can grow no richer; he is as rich as he can be, infinitely so. He loves you now; then it can not be possible that he will by reason of an increase in his own personal glory forsake you, for everlasting glories now crown his head; he can never be more glorious and great, and therefore he will love you still. Sometimes, on the other hand, one friend grows poorer, and then the other forsakes him; but you never can grow poorer than you are, for you are “a poor sinner and nothing at all” now; you have nothing of your own; all you have is borrowed, all given you by him. He can not love you, then, less, because you grow poorer; for poverty that hath nothing is at least as poor as it can be, and can never sink lower in the scale. Christ, therefore, must love thee for all thy nakedness and all thy poverty.

“But I may prove sinful,” sayest thou. Yes, but thou canst not be more so than he foreknew thou wouldst be; and yet he loved thee with the foreknowledge of all thy sins.

Surely, then, when it happens it will occasion no surprise to him; he knew it all beforehand, and he can not swerve from his love; no circumstance can possibly arise that ever will divide the Saviour from his love to his people, and the saint from his love to his Saviour. He is “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

III. Now, then, AN INFERENCE TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS. Lavater says, “The qualities of your friends will be those of your enemies; cold friends, cold enemies, half friends, half enemies, fervid enemies, warm friends.” Knowing this to be a truth, I have often congratulated myself, when my enemies have spoken fiercely against me. Well, I have thought, “My friends love me hard and fast; let my enemies be as hot as they please; it only indicates that the friends are proportionately firm in affection. Then we draw this inference, that if Christ sticks close, and he is our friend, then our enemies will stick close, and never leave us till we die. O, Christian, because Christ sticks close, the devil will stick close too; he will be at you and with you; the dog of hell will never cease his howlings, till you reach the other side of Jordan; no place in this world is out of bow-shot of that great enemy; till you have crossed the stream his arrows *can* reach you, and they will. If Christ gave himself for you, the devil will do all he can to destroy you; if Christ has been long-suffering to you, Satan will be persevering, in hopes that Christ may forget you; he will strive after you, and strive until he shall see you safely landed in heaven. But be not disappointed: the louder Satan roars, the more proof you shall have of Christ’s love. “Give me,” said old Rutherford, “give me a roaring devil rather than a sleeping one; for sleeping devils make me slumber, but roaring ones provoke me to run to my Master.” O! be glad, then, if the world rant at thee, if thy foes attack thee fiercely. Christ is just as full of love to thee as they are of hatred. Therefore,

“Be firm and strong;

Be grace thy shield and Christ thy song.”

And now I have a question to ask: that question I ask of every man and every woman in this place, and of every child too—Is Jesus Christ your friend? Have you a friend at court—at heaven’s court? Is the judge of quick and dead your friend? Can you say that you love him, and has he ever revealed himself in the way of love to you? Dear hearer, do not answer that question for thy neighbor; answer it for thyself. Peer or peasant, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, this question is for each of you; therefore, ask it: Is Christ my friend? Did you ever consider that question? Have you ever asked it? O! to be able to say “Christ is my friend,” is one of the sweetest things in the world. A man who had lived much in sin, one day casually entered a place of worship. Before the sermon, this hymn was sung—

“Jesus, lover of my soul.”

The next day the man was met by an acquaintance who asked him how he liked the sermon. Said he, “I do not know, but there were two or three words that took such a hold of me that I did not know what to do with myself. The minister read that hymn, ‘Jesus,

lover of my soul.' Ah!' said he, though he was by no means a religious man, "to be able to say that, I would give up all I have got! But do you think," he asked "that Jesus ever will be the lover of such a man as I am? 'Jesus, lover of *my* soul!' O! could I say it." And then he buried his head in his hands and wept. I have every reason to fear that he went back to his sin, and was the same afterwards as before. But, you see, he had conscience enough to let him know how valuable it was to have Christ for his lover and his friend. Ah! rich man, thou hast many friends. There be some here who have toiled for their country's good, and deserve a meed of honor at their country's hands, who, for one mistake—or what, perhaps, was a mistake—have been neglected by too many who once appeared to be their most trusty adherents. O! put no confidence, ye great men and ye rich, in the adherence of your friends. David said in his hast, "All men are liars;" you may one day have to say it at your leisure. And O! ye kind and affectionate hearts, who are not rich in wealth, but who are rich in love—and that is the world's best wealth—put this golden coin among your silver ones, and it will sanctify them all. Get Christ's love shed abroad in your hearts, and your mother's love, your daughter's love, your husband's love, your wife's love, will become more sweet than ever. The love of Christ cast not out the love of relatives, but it sanctifies our loves, and makes them sweeter far. Remember, dear hearer, the love of men and women is very sweet; but all must pass away; and what will you do, if you have no wealth but the wealth that fadeth, and no love but the love which dies, when death shall come? O! to have the love of Christ! You can take that across the river of death with you; you can wear it as your bracelet in heaven, and set it up as a seal upon your hand; for his love is "strong as death and mightier than the grave." Good old Bishop Beveridge, I think it was, when dying, did not know his best friends. Said one, "Bishop Beveridge, do you know me?" Said he, "Who are you?" and when the name was mentioned, he said, "No." "But don't you know your wife, Bishop?" "What is her name?" said he. Said she, "I am your wife." "I did not know I had got one," said he. Poor old man! his faculties all failed him. At last one stooped down and whispered, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" "Yes," said he, making an effort to speak, "I have known him these forty years, and I never can forget him." It is marvelous how memory will hold the place with Jesus, when it will with no one else; and it is equally marvelous, that,

"When all created things are dry, Christ's fullness is the same."

My dear hearers, do think of this matter. O that you might get Christ for your friend; he will never be your friend while you are self-righteous; he will never be your friend while you live in sin. But do you believe yourselves guilty? Do you desire to leave off sin? Do you want to be saved? Do you desire to be renewed? Then let me tell you, my Master loves you! Poor, weak, and helpless worms, my Master's heart is full of love to you; his eyes at this moment are looking down with pity on you. "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" He now bids me tell you that he died for all of you who confess yourselves to be sinners, and feel it. He bids me say to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." He tells

me to proclaim salvation full and free; full, needing nothing of yours to help it; free, needing nothing of yours to buy it.

“Come ye thirsty, come and welcome;
God’s free bounty glorify:
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh—
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy.”

There is nothing I feel that I fail so much in as addressing sinners. O! I wish I could cry my heart out, and preach my heart out, to you and at you.

“Dear Saviour, draw reluctant hearts,
To thee let sinners fly,
And take the bliss thy love imparts;
And drink, and never die.”

Farewell, with this one thought—we shall never all of us meet together here again. It is a very solemn thought, but according to the course of nature and the number of deaths, if all of you were willing to come here next Sabbath morning, it is not at all likely that all of you would be alive; one out of this congregation will be sure to have gone the way of all flesh. Farewell, thou that are appointed to death; I know not where thou art—yon strong man, or yon tender maiden with the hectic flush of consumption on her cheek. I know not who is appointed to death; but I do now most solemnly take my farewell of such an one. Farewell, poor soul; and is it farewell for ever? Shall we meet in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the blessed; or do I bid you farewell now for ever? I do solemnly bid farewell to you for ever, if you live and die without Christ. But I can not bear that dreary thought; and I therefore say, poor sinner! stop and consider—consider thy ways, and now “turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” “Why will ye *die*?” “Why will ye die?” “Why *will* ye die?” Ah! ye can not answer that question. May God help you to answer it in a better fashion, by saying, “Here Lord!

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
O Son of God I come to thee.

I trust my soul in thy kind hands.” The Lord bless you all for Christ’s sake! Amen.

The Leafless Tree

A Sermon

(No. 121)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, March 8, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and it shall be eaten as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”—[Isaiah 6:3](#).

OUR FIRST business to-night will be briefly to explain the metaphor employed in the text. The prophet was told that despite all the remonstrances he was instructed to deliver, and notwithstanding the eloquent earnestness of his lips, which had been just touched by a live coal from off the altar, still the people of Israel would persevere in their sins, and would therefore be certainly destroyed. He asked the question, “Lord, how long?” that is, How long will the people be thus impenitent? How long will thy sore judgment thus continue? And he was informed that God would waste and destroy the cities and their inhabitants, till the land should be utterly desolate. Then it was added, for his comfort, “Yet in it shall be a tenth.” And so it happened; for when “Nebuchadnezzar carried away all Jerusalem,” the historian gives this reservation—’none remained save the poorer sort of the people of the land.” They were left by the captain of the guard, “to be vine-dressers and husbandmen.” Thus in it there was a tenth; this small remnant of the people, however, was to be nearly destroyed too. “It shall return and shall be eaten;” the sense is, eaten up or consumed. The poor creatures left in the land, many of them fled into Egypt at the time of the conspiracy of Ishmael (not Ishmael, the son of Hagar, but an unworthy member of the royal family of Judah), and there in Egypt most of them were cut off and perished. “But,” says God, “although this tenth only shall be preserved, and then even this small part shall be subjected to many perils yet Israel shall not be destroyed, for it shall be as a terebinth tree and as an oak;” their “substance is in them, when they cast their leaves,” and so lose their verdure and their beauty; thus, in like manner, a holy seed, a chosen remnant, shall still be the substance of the children of Israel, when the fruitful land is stripped of its foliage, and that fair garden of earth is barren as the desert.

The figure is taken, first of all, from the terebinth or turpentine tree—here translated the teil tree. That tree is an evergreen, with this exception, that in very severe and inclement weather it loses its leaves; but even then the terebinth tree is not dead. And so of the oak; it loses its leaves every year, of course, but even then it is not dead. “So,” says God, “you have seen the tree in winter, standing naked and bare, without any sign of life, its roots buried in the hard and frozen soil, and its naked branches exposed to every blast, without a bloom or

a bud; yet the substance is in the tree when the leaves are gone. It is still alive, and it shall, by and by, in due season, bud and bloom; so," says he, "Nebuchadnezzar shall cut off all the leaves of the tree of Israel—take away the inhabitants, only a tenth shall be left, and they shall well nigh be eaten up; still the church of God and the Israel of God never shall be destroyed; they shall be like the terebinth tree and the oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

I hope I have made the meaning of the passage as plain as words can make it. Now, then, for the application—first, *to the Jews*; secondly, *to the Church*; thirdly, *to each believer*.

I. First, TO THE JEWS.

What a history is the history of the Jew! He has antiquity stamped upon his forehead. His is a lineage more noble than that of any knights or even kings of this our island, for he can trace his pedigree back to the very loins of Abraham, and through him to that patriarch who entered into the ark, and thence up to Adam himself. Our history is hidden in gloom and darkness; but theirs, with certainty, may be read from the first moment even down till now. And what a checkered history has been the history of the Jewish nation. Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have swept them all away with the huge broom of destruction; the tenth left was again give over to the slaughter; and one would have thought we should have heard no more of Israel; but in a little time they rose phoenix-like, from their ashes. A second temple was builded and the nation became strong once more, and though often swept with desolations in the mean time, yet it did not abide, and the scepter did not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came. And, since then, how huge have been the waves that have rushed over the Jewish race! The Roman emperor razed the city to the ground, and left not a vestige standing; another emperor changed the name of Jerusalem into that of Eliah, and forbade a Jew to go within some miles of it, so that he might not even look upon his beloved city. It was plowed and left desolate. But is the Jew conquered? Is he a subjugated man? Is his country seized? No; he is still one of earth's nobles—distressed, insulted, spit upon; still it is written, "To the Jew first, and afterward to the Gentile." He claims a high dignity above us, and he has a history to come which will be greater and more splendid than the history of any nation that has yet existed. If we read the Scriptures aright, the Jews have a great deal to do with this world's history. They shall be gathered in; Messiah shall come, the Messiah they are looking for—the same Messiah who came once shall come again—shall come as they expected him to come the first time. They then thought he would come a prince to reign over them, and so he will when he comes again. He will come to be king of the Jews, and to reign over his people most gloriously; for when he comes, Jew and Gentile will have equal privileges, though there shall yet be some distinction afforded to that royal family from whose loins Jesus came; for he shall sit upon the throne of his father David, and unto him shall be gathered all nations. O!

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,

A remnant weak and small,
ye may indeed,
“Hail him who saves you by his grace,
And crown him Lord of all;”

your church shall never die, and your race shall never become extinct. The Lord hath said it. “The race of Abraham shall endure for ever, and his seed as many generations.”

But why is it that the Jewish race is preserved? We have our answer in the text: “The holy seed is the substance thereof.” There is something within a tree mysterious, hidden, and unknown, which preserves life in it when every thing outward tends to kill it. So in the Jewish race there is a secret element which keeps it alive. We know what it is: it is the “remnant according to the election of grace;” in the worst of ages there has never been a day so black but there was a Hebrew found to hold the lamp of God. There has always been found a Jew who loved Jesus; and though the race now despise the great Redeemer, yet there are not a few of the Hebrew race who still love Jesus, the Saviour of the uncircumcised, and bow before him. It is these few, this holy seed, that are the substance of the nation; and for their sake, through their prayers, because of God’s love to them, he still says of Israel to all nations, “Touch not these mine anointed, do my prophets no harm. These are the descendants of Abraham, my friend. I have sworn, and will not repent; I will show kindness unto them for their father’s sake, and for the sake of the remnant I have chosen.”

Let us think a little more of the Jews than we have been wont; let us pray oftener for them. “Pray for the peace old Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love her.” As truly as any great thing is done in this world for Christ’s kingdom, the Jews will have more to do with it than any of us have dreamed. So much for the first point. the Jewish nation is like “a ter-ebinth tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

II. And now, secondly, THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, whereof the Jewish people are but a dim shadow, and an emblem.

The church has had its trials; trials from without and trials within. It has had days of blood-red persecution, and of fiery trial; it has had times of sad apostacy, when an evil heart of unbelief and departing from the living God has broken out, and a root of bitterness springing up has troubled many, and thereby they have been defiled. Yet, blessed be God, through all the winters of the church she still lived, and she gives signs now of a sweeter spring-tide, a fresher greenness and a healthier condition than she has shown before for many a day. Why is it that the church is still preserved, when she looks so dead? For this reason: that there is in the midst of her—though many are hypocrites and impostors—a “chosen seed,” who are “the substance thereof.” You might have looked back a hundred years ago upon the professing church of Christ in this land, and what a sad spectacle it would have exhibited! In the Church of England there was mere formality; in the Independent and

Baptist denominations there was truth, but it was dead, cold, lifeless truth. Ministers dreamed on in their pulpits, and hearers snored in their pews; infidelity was triumphant; the house of God was neglected and desecrated. The church was like a tree that had lost its leaves: it was in a wintry state. But did it die? No; there was a holy seed within it. Six young men were expelled from Oxford for praying, reading the Bible, and talking to poor people about Christ; and these six young men, with many others whom the Lord had hidden by fifties in the caves of the earth, secret and unknown—these young men, leaders of a glorious revival, came out, and though ridiculed and laughed at as Methodists, they brought forth a great and glorious revival, almost equaling the commencement of the gospel triumphs under Paul and the apostles, and very little inferior to the great Reformation of Luther, of Calvin, and Zwingle. And just now the church is to a great degree in a barren and lifeless state. But will she therefore die? you say that true doctrine is scarce, that zeal is rare, that there is little life and energy in the pulpit and true devotion in the pew, while formality and hypocrisy stalk over us, and we sleep in our cradles. But will the church die? No; she is like a teil tree and an oak; her substance is in her when she has lost her leaves; there is a holy seed in her still that is the substance thereof. Where these are we know not; some, I doubt not, are here in this church—some, I hope, are to be found in every church of professing Christians: and woe worth the day to the church that loses her holy seed; for she must die, like the oak blasted by the lightning, whose heart is scorched out of it—broken down, because it has no substance in it.

Let me now draw your attention, as a church connected with this place, to this point—that the holy seed is the substance of the church. A great many of you might be compared to the bark to the tree; some of you are like the big limbs; others are like pieces of the trunk. Well, we should be very sorry to lose any of you; but we could afford to do so without any serious damage to the life of the tree. Yet there are some here—God knoweth who they are—who are the substance of the tree. By the word “substance” is meant the life, the inward principle. The inward principle is in the tree, when it has lost its leaves. Now, God discerns some men in this church, I doubt not, who are toward us like the inward principle of the oak; they are the substance of the church. I would feign hope that all the members of the church in some degree contribute to the substance; but I can not think so. I am obliged to say I doubt it; because when one hath fallen and another, it makes us remember that a church hath much in it that is not life. There be some branches on the vine that be cut off, because they do not draw sap from the heart of it, they are only branches bound on by profession, pretended graftings that have never struck root into the parent stock, and that must be cut off, and hewn down, and cast into the fire. But there is a holy seed in the church that is the substance of it.

Please to note here, that the life of a tree is not determined by the shape of the branches, nor by the way it grows, but it is the substance. The shape or a church is not its life. In one

place I see a church formed in an Episcopalian shape; in another place I see one formed in a Presbyterian shape; then, again, I see one, like ours, formed on an Independent principle. Here I see one with sixteen ounces to the pound of doctrine; there I see one with eight, and some with very little clear doctrine at all. And yet I find life in all the churches, in some degree—some good men in all of them. How do I account for this? Why, just in this way—that the oak may be alive, whatever its shape, if it has got the substance. If there be but a holy seed in the church, the church will live; and it is astonishing how the church will live under a thousand errors, if there be but the vital principle in it. You will find good men among the denominations that you can not receive as being sound in faith. You say, “What! can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” and you go through, and find that there are even in them some true Nazarites of the right order. The very best of men found in the worst of churches! A church lives not because of its rubrics, and its canons, and its articles; it lives because of the holy seed that is in it as the substance. No church can die while it has a holy seed in it, and no church can live that has not the holy seed, for “the holy seed is the substance thereof.”

Observe, again, that the substance of the oak is a hidden thing; you can not see it. When the oak or the terebinth is standing destitute of leaves, you know that life is there somewhere. But you can not see it. And very likely you can not and do not know the men that are the holy seed, the substance of the church. Perhaps you imagine the substance of the church lies in the pulpit. Nay, friend! Let us pray to God that such of us as are in the pulpit may be a part of that substance; but much of the substance of the church lies where you don't know any thing of it. There is a mine near Plymouth, where the men who work in it, two hundred and fifty feet below the surface, have a little shelf for their Bibles and hymn-books, and a little place where every morning, when they go down in the black darkness, they bow before God, and praise him whose tender mercies are over all his works. You never heard of these miners, perhaps, and do not know of them; but perhaps some of them are the very substance of the church. There sits Mr. Somebody in that pew; O! what a support he is to the church. Yes, in money matters, perhaps; but do you know, there is poor old Mrs. Nobody in the aisle that is most likely a greater pillar to the church than he, for she is a holier Christian, one who lives nearer to her God and serves him better, and she is “the substance thereof.” Ah! that old woman in the garret who is often in prayer; that old man on his bed who spends days and nights in supplication; such people as these are the substance of the church. O! you may take away your prelates, your orators, and the best and greatest of those who stand among earth's mighty men, and their place could be supplied; but take away our intercessors; take away the men and women that breathe out prayer by night and day, and like the priests of old offer the morning and evening lamb as a perpetual sacrifice, and you kill the church at once. What are the ministers? They are but the arms of the church, and the lips of it. A man may be both dumb and armless, and yet live. But these, the heavenly seed, the chosen

men and women who live near their God, and serve him with sacred fervent piety—these are the heart of the church; we can not do without them. If we lose them we must die. “The holy seed is the substance thereof.”

Then, my hearers, thou art a church member. Let me ask thee—art thou one of the holy seed? Has thou been begotten again to a lively hope? Has God made thee holy by the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, and by the justifying righteousness of Christ, and by the application to thy conscience of the blood of Jesus? If so, then thou art the substance of the church. They may pass by thee and not notice thee, for thou art little; but the substance is little; the life-germ within the grain of barley is too small for us, perhaps, to detect; the life within the egg is almost an animalcula—you can scarcely see it; and so the life of the church is among the little ones, where we can scarcely find it out. Rejoice, if you are much in prayer; you are the life of the church. But you, O you proud man, pull down your grand thoughts of yourself; you may give to the church, you may speak for the church, and act for the church, but unless you are a holy seed you are not the substance thereof, and it is the substance which is in reality of the greatest value.

But here let me say one thing before I leave this point. Some of you will say, “How is it that good men are the means of preserving the visible church?” I answer, the holy seed doth this, because it derives its life from Christ. If the holy seed had to preserve the church by its own purity and its own strength, the church would go to ruin to-morrow; but it is because these holy ones draw fresh life from Christ continually that they are able to be, as it were, the salvation of the body, and by their influence, direct and indirect, shed life over the whole visible church. The prayers of those living ones in Zion bring down many a blessing upon us; the groans and cries of these earnest intercessors prevail with heaven, and bring down very argosies of mercy from the gates of paradise. And besides, their holy example tends to check us and preserve us in purity; they walk among us like God’s own favored ones, wrapped in white, reflecting his image wherever they go, and tending, under God, to the sanctifying of believers, not through their vaunting any self-righteousness, but by stirring up believers to do more for Christ, and to be more like him. “The holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

III. And now I come to the third point. this is true of EVERY INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER: his substance is in him when he has lost his leaves.

The Arminian says that when a Christian loses his leaves he is dead. “No,” say God’s Word, “he is not; he may look as if he were dead, and not have so much as here and there a leaf upon the topmost bough; but he is not dead. Their substance is in them even when they lose their leaves.”

By losing their leaves allow me to understand two things. Christian men lose their leaves when they lose their comforts, when they lose the sensible enjoyment of their Master’s presence, and when their full assurance is turned into doubting. You have had many such

a time as that, have you not? Ah! you were one day in such a state of joy, that you said you could

“Sit and sing yourself away
To everlasting bliss.”

But a wintry state came, and your joy all departed, and you stood like a bare tree, after the wind had swept it in the time of winter, with just perhaps one sere leaf hanging by a thread on the topmost bough. But you were not dead then; no, your substance was in you, when you had lost your leaves. You could not see that substance, and good reason why, because your life was hid with Christ in God; you saw not your signs, but you had your substance still, though you could not discover it. There were no heavings of faith, but faith was there; there were no lookings out of hope, but though hope’s eyelids were shut, the eyes were there, to be opened afterwards; there was no lifting, perhaps, of the hand of ardent prayer, but the hands and arms were there, though they hung powerless by the side. God said, afterwards, “Strengthen the feeble knees, and lift up the hands that hang down.” Your substance was in you when you had lost your leaves. Good Baxter says—“We do not see graces, except when they are in exercise; and yet they are as much there when they are not in exercise as when they are.” Saith he, “Let a man take a walk into a wood; there lieth a hare or a rabbit asleep under the leaves; but he can not see the creature until it is frightened, and it runneth out, and then he seeth it to be there.” So if faith be in exercise you will perceive your evidence, but if faith be slumbering and still, you will be led to doubt its existence; and yet it is there all the while.

“Mountains when in darkness hidden,
Are as real as in day,”

said one; and truly the faith of the Christian, when shrouded by doubts and fears, is just as much there as when he rejoiceth devoutly in the display of it.

It is a common error of young converts that they attempt to live by their experience, instead of tracing their life up to its precious source. I have known persons rejoicing in the fullest assurance one day, and sinking into the deepest despondency the next. The Lord will sometimes strip you of the leaves of evidence to teach you to live by faith, as John Kent says—

“If to-day he deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin;
He to-morrow may distress us
Make us feel the plague within;
All to make us
Sick of self and fond of him.”

But, ah! there is a worse phase to the subject than this. Some Christians lose their leaves not by doubts, but by sin. This is a tender topic—one which needs a tender hand to touch.

O! there are some in our churches that have lost their leaves by lust and sin. Fair professors once they were; they stood green among the church, like the very leaves of paradise; but in an evil hour they fell, the slaves of temptation. They were God's own people by many infallible marks and signs; and if they were so, though it is grievous that they should have lost their leaves, yet there is the sweet consolation, their substance is in them still: they are still the Lord's, still his living children, though they have fallen into the coma of sin, and are now in a fainting fit, having gone astray from him, and having their animation suspended, while life is still there. Some, as soon as they see a Christian do any thing inconsistent with his profession, say, "That man is no child of God; he can not be; it is impossible." Ay, but, sir, remember what he thought who once said—"If a brother err, ye that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." It is a fact, deny it who will, and abuse it, if you please, to your own wicked purposes; I can not help it—it is a fact that some living children of God have been allowed—and an awful allowance it is—to go into the very blackest sins. Do you think David was not a child of God, even when he sinned? It is a hard subject to touch; but it is not to be denied. He had the life of God within him before; and though he sinned—O! horrid and awful was the crime!—yet his substance was in him when he lost his leaves. And many a child of God has gone far away from his Master; but his substance is in him. And how know we this? Because a dead tree never lives again; if the substance be really gone, it never lives; and God's holy Word assures us, that if the real life of grace could die out in any one, it could never come again; for saith the apostle, "it is impossible, if they have been once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost"—if these fall away—"it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Their tree is "dead, plucked up by the roots." And the apostle Peter says—"For if, after they have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, they are again turned back, their last end shall be worse than the first." But now take David, or take Peter, which you please. Peter we will have. O! how foully did he curse his Master! With many an oath he denied him. But had not Peter the life of God in him then? Yes; and how do we know? Because when his Master looked upon him, he "went out and wept bitterly." Ah! if he had been a dead man, hardened and without the substance in him, his Master might have looked to all eternity, and he would not have wept bitterly. How know I that David was yet alive? Why, by this—that although there was a long, long winter, and there were many prickings of conscience, like the workings of the sap within a tree, abortive attempts to thrust forward here and there a shoot before its time, yet when the hour was come, and Nathan came to him and said, "Thou art the man," had David been dead, without the life of God, he would have spurned Nathan from him, and might have done what Manasseh did with Isaiah, cut him in pieces in his anger; but instead of that he bowed his head and wept before God; and still it is written, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." His substance was in him, when he lost his leaves. O! have

pity upon poor fallen brethren. O! burn them not; they are not dead logs; though their leaves are gone their substance is in them. God can see grace in their hearts when you can not see it; he has put a life there that can never expire, for he has said, "I give unto my sheep *eternal* life," and that means a life that live for ever; "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into *everlasting* life." You may choke the well up with big stones, but the water will find its way out yet, and well up notwithstanding. And so the heir of heaven may, to the grief of the church and to the injury of himself, most grievously transgress—and weep, my eyes, O weep for any that have done so, and O bleed, my heart, and thou hast bled, for any that have so sinned—but yet their "substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed"—that is, Christ within them, the Holy Ghost within them, the new creature within them—"the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Poor backslider! here is a word of comfort for you. I would not comfort you in your sins; God forbid! But if you know your sins and hate them, let me comfort you. Thou art not dead! As Jesus said of the damsel, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," so let me say of thee, "Thou art not dead; thou shalt yet live." Dost thou repent? Dost thou grieve over thy sin? That is thee bud that shows that there is life within. When a common sinner sins he repents not, or if he doth repent it is with a legal repentance. His conscience pricks him, but he hushes it. He does not leave his sin and turn from it.

But did you ever see a child of God after he had been washed from a foul sin? He was a changed man. I know such an one, who used to carry a merry countenance, and many were the jokes he made in company; but when I met him after an awful sin, there was a solemnity about his countenance that was unusual to him. He looked, I should say, something like Dante, the poet, of whom the boys said, "There is the man that has been in hell;" because he had written of hell, and looked like it—he looked so terrible. And when we spoke of sin there was such a solemnity about him; and when we spoke of going astray the tears ran down his cheeks, as much to say, "I have been astray too." He seemed like good Christian, after he had been in Giant Despair's castle. Do you not remember, beloved, the guide who took the pilgrims up to the top of a hill called Clear, and he showed them from the top of the hill a lot of men with their eyes put out, groping among the tombs, and Christian asked what it meant. Said the guide, "These are pilgrims that were caught in Giant Despair's castle; the giant had their eyes put out, and they are left to wander among the tombs to die, and their bones are to be left in the court-yard." Whereupon John Bunyan very naively says, "I looked, and saw their eyes full of water, for they remembered they might have been there too." Just as the man talked and spoke that I once knew. He seemed to wonder why God had not left him to be an apostate for ever, as the lot of Judas or Demas. He seemed to think it such a startling thing that while many had gone aside altogether from God's way, he should still have had his substance in him, when he had lost his leaves, and that God should still have loved him. Perhaps, beloved, God allows some such men to live, and sin, and afterward

repent, for this reason. You know there are some voices needed in music that are very rare, and when, now and then, such a voice is to be heard, every one will go to hear it. I have thought that perhaps some of these men in heaven will sing soprano notes before the throne—choice, wondrous notes of grace, because they have gone into the depths of sin after profession; and yet he had loved them when their feet made hast to perdition, and fetched them up, because he “loved them well.” There are but few such; for most men will go foully into sin; they will go out from us because they are not of us, for if they had been of us they would doubtless have continued with us. But there have been a few such—great saints, then great backsliding sinners, and then great saints again. Their substance was in them when they had lost their leaves. O! you that have gone far astray, sit and weep. You can not weep too much, though you should cry with Herbert—

“O, who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain!
My grief hath need of all the water things
That nature hath produced.”

You might well say—

“Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary, weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree.”

But yet remember, “He hath not forsaken his people, neither hath he cut them off;” for still he says—

“Return, O wanderer, return,
And seek an injured father’s heart.”

Return! return! return! Thy Father’s bowels still move for thee. He speaks through the written oracles at this moment, saying, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, O Israel? How can I make thee as Adimah? How can I set thee as Zeboim?” My bowels are moved; my repentings are kindled together; for I will heal their backslidings, I will receive them graciously, I will love them freely, for they are mine still. As the terebinth and as the oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, even so the holy seed within the elect and called vessels of mercy, is still the substance thereof.

And now, what have I to say to some of you that live in black sin, and yet excuse yourselves on account of the recorded falls of God’s people? Sir, know this! Inasmuch as you do this, you wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction. If one man has taken poison, and there has been a physician by his side so skillful that he has saved his life by a heavenly antidote, is that any reason why thou, who hast no physician and no antidote, should yet think that the poison will not kill thee? Why, man, the sin that does not damn a Christian,

because Christ washes him in his blood, will damn you. Said Brookes—and I will repeat his words and have done—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, said the apostle, be his sins never so many; but he that believeth not shall be damned, be his sins never so few. Truly your sins may be little; but you are lost for them without Christ. Your sins may be great; but if Christ shall pardon them, then you shall be saved. The one question, then, I have to ask of thee, is—Hast thou Christ? For if thou hast not, then thou hast not the holy seed; thou art a dead tree, and in due time thou shalt be tinder for hell. Thou art a rotten-hearted tree, all touch-wood, ready to be broken in pieces; eaten by the worms of lust; and ah! when the fire shall take hold of thee, what a blazing and a burning! O! that thou hadst life! O! that God would give it to thee! O! that thou wouldst now repent! O! that thou wouldst cast thyself on Jesus! O! that thou wouldst turn to him with full purpose of heart! For then, remember, thou wouldst be saved—saved now, and saved for ever; for “the holy seed” would be “the substance thereof.”

Christ About His Father's Business

A Sermon

(No. 122)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 15, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”—[Luke 2:49](#).

Behold then, how great an interest God the Father takes in the work of salvation. It is called “his business;” and though Jesus Christ came to accomplish our redemption, came to set us a perfect example, and to establish a way of salvation, yet he came not upon his own business, but upon his Father's business—his Father taking as much interest in the salvation of men as even he himself did—the great heart of the Father being as full of love as the bleeding heart of the Son, and the mind of the first person of the Trinity being as tenderly affected towards his chosen as even the mind of Christ Jesus, our substitute, our surety, and our all. It is his “Father's business” Behold, also, the condescension of the Son, that he should become the servant of the Father, to do not his own business, but the Father's business. See how he stoops to become a child, subject to his mother; and mark how he stoops to become a man, subject to God his Father. He took upon himself the nature of man, and though he was the Son, equal in power with God, who “counted it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet he “took upon himself the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Learn, then, O believer, to love all the persons of the Divine Trinity alike. Remember that salvation is no more the work of one than of the other. They all three agree in one, and as in the creation they all said, “Let *us* make man;” so in salvation they all say, “Let us save man;” and each of them does so much of it that it is truly the work of each and undividedly the work of all. Remember that notable passage of Isaiah the prophet—“*I* will divide him a portion with the great and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” God divides, and Christ divides. The triumph is God's; the Father “divides for him a portion with the great;” it is equally Christ's, he “divides the spoil with the strong.” Set not one person before the other; reverently adore them alike, for they are one—one in design, one in character, and one in essence; and whilst they be truly three, we may in adoration exclaim, “Unto the one God of heaven and earth the glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

But now I shall invite your attention, first, to *the spirit of the Saviour*, as breathed in these words, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” and then, secondly, I shall exhort the children of God, with all the earnestness which I can command, with all the intensity of power which I can summon to the point, to *labour after the same spirit*, that they too may unfeignedly say, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? ”

I. First, then note THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. It was a spirit of undivided consecration to the will of God his Father. It was a spirit urged onward by an absolute necessity to serve God. Note the word "must." "Wist ye not that I *must*?" There is a something in me which prevents me from doing other work. I feel an all-controlling, overwhelming influence which constrains me at all times and in every place to be about my Father's business; the spirit of high, holy, entire, sincere, determined consecration in heart to God. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

First, *what was the impelling power which (as it were) forced Christ to be about his Father's business?* and then, secondly, *how did he do his Father's business, and what was it?*

1. What was the impelling power which made Christ say, "I must be about my Father's business?" In the first place, it was the spirit of *obedience* which thoroughly possessed itself of his bosom. When he took upon him the form of a servant he received the spirit of an obedient servant too, and became as perfect in the capacity of a servant as he had ever been in that of a ruler, though in that he had perfectly executed all his of life. Beloved believer! Do you not remember when you were first converted to God, when the young life of your new-born spirit was strong and active how impetuously you desired to obey God, and how intense was your eagerness to serve him in some way or other? I can remember well how I could scarcely abide myself five minutes without doing something for Christ. If I walked the street I must have a tract with me; if I went into a railway carriage I must drop a tract out of the window; if I had a moment's leisure I must be upon my knees or at my Bible if I were in company I must turn the subject of conversation to Christ, that I might serve my Master. Alas, I must confess, much of that strength of purpose has departed from me, as I doubt not it has from many of you who, with a greater prominence, have also received diminished zeal. It may be that in the young dawn of life we did imprudent things in order to serve the cause of Christ; but I say, give me back the time again, with all its imprudence and with all its hastiness, if I might but have the same love to my Master, the same overwhelming influence in my spirit making me obey because it was a pleasure to me to obey God. Now, Christ felt just in the same way. He must do it. He must serve God; he must be obedient; he could not help it. The spirit was in him, and would work, just as the spirit of disobedience in the wicked impels them to sin. Lust, sometimes, drags the sinner on to sin with a power so strong and mighty that poor man can no more resist it than the sere leaf can resist the tempest. We had lusts so omnipotent, that they had but to suggest, and we were their willing slaves; we had habits so tyrannical that we could not break their chains; we were impelled to evil, like the straw in the whirlwind, or the chip in the whirlpool. We were hurried whithersoever our lusts would bear us—"drawn away and enticed." Now, in the new heart it is just the same, only in another direction. The spirit of obedience worketh in us, impelling us to serve our God, so that when that spirit is unclogged and free we may truly say, "We must be about our Father's business." We cannot help it.

2. But Christ had what some men only have. He had another motive for this, another impelling cause. He had *a sacred call to the work which he had undertaken*, and that secret call forced him on. You think, perhaps it is fanatical to talk of sacred calls; but call it fanatical or no, this one thing I will own—the belief in a special call to do a special work is like the arm of omnipotence to a man. Let a man believe that God has set him to do a particular work, and you may sneer at him: what cares he? He would give as much for your sneer as he would for your smile, and that is nothing at all. He believes God intends him to do the work. You say nay: but he never asked you for your vote upon the question; he has received God's message, as he thinks, and he goes on, and you cannot resist him. If he sits still for a little while, a spirit haunts him—he knows not what it is, but he is unhappy unless he engages in a business which he feels is the commission of his life. If he hold his tongue when God has commanded him to speak, the word is like fire in his bones—it burns its way out, until at last he says, with Elihu, "I am bled with matter; I am like a vessel that wanteth vent;" I must speak, or burst; I cannot help it. Depend upon it, the men that have done the greatest work for our holy religion have been the men who had the special call to it. I no more doubt the call of Luther than I doubt the call of the apostles, and he did not doubt it either. One of the reasons why Luther did a thing was because other people did not like it. When he was about to smite a blow at the Papacy by marrying a nun all his friends said it was a fearful thing. Luther consulted them, and did the deed, perhaps, all the sooner because they disapproved of it. A strange reason it may seem, that a man should do a thing because he was dissuaded from it; but he felt that it was his work to strike the Papacy right and left, and for that he would give up everything, even the friendship of friends. His business, by night and by day, was to pray down the pope, to preach down the pope, to write down the pope, and do it he must, though often in the roughest, coarsest manner, with iron gauntlets on his hands. It was his work; do it he must. You might have done what you pleased with Luther, even to the rending out his tongue: he would have taken his pen, dipped it in fire, and written in burning words the doom of Papacy. He could not help it, heaven had forced him to the work, he had a special commission given him from on high, and no man could stay him any more than he could stay the wind in its careering, or the tide in its motions. Christ had a special work. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor." And he felt the effects of this anointing—the power of this impelling. And stay he must not, he could not, he dare not. "I must," said he, "be about my Father's business."

3. But once more, Christ had something which few of us can fully know. He had *a vow upon him*—the vow to do the work from all eternity. He had become the surety of the covenant, he had sworn that he would execute his Father's business. He had taken a solemn oath that he would become man; that he would pay the ransom price of all his beloved ones; that he would come and do his Father's business, whatever that might be. "Lo, I come," said

he. "In the volume of the book, it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God." Therefore, being faithful and true, the covenant, the engagement, the suretyship, the sworn promise and the oath made him say, "I must be about my Father's business." Whenever you make a vow, my dear friends—and do that very seldom—take care that you keep it. Few should be the vows that men make, but they should always be sincerely kept. God asketh no vow of us, but when his Spirit moveth us to make a vow—and we may do so honestly if we make a vow in his strength—we are bound to keep it. And he that feels that he has made a vow, must then feel himself impelled to do the work which he hath vowed to do. Let the difficulty be never so great, if you have vowed to overcome it, do it. Let tire mountain be never so high, if you have made a vow to God that you will attempt it scale its summit, and never give it up. If the vow be a right one, God will help you to accomplish it. O ye upon whom are the vows of the Lord! (and some of you have taken solemn vows upon you, by making a profession of religion) I beseech you, by the sacrament in which you dedicated yourself to your Lord, and by that other sacrament in which you found communion with Jesus, now to fulfill your vows, and pay them daily, nightly, hourly, constantly, perpetually; and let these compel you to say, "I must be about my Father's business." These, I think, were the impelling motives which forced Christ on in his heavenly labor.

Secondly. But now, what was his Father's business? I think it lay in three things—example, establishment, expiation.

1. One part of his Father's business was, to send into the world a perfect *example for our imitation*. God had written divers books of example in the lives of the saints. One man was noted for one virtue, and another for another. At last, God determined that he would gather all his works into one volume, and give a condensation of all virtues in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now he determined to unite all the parts into one, to string all the pearls on one necklace, and to make them all apparent around the neck of one single person. The sculptor finds here a leg from some eminent master, and there a hand from another mighty sculptor. Here he finds an eye, and there a head full of majesty. He saith, within himself, "I will compound those glories, I will put them all together; then it shall be the model man. I will make *the statue par excellence*, which shall stand first in beauty, and shall be noted ever afterwards as the model of manhood." So said God, "There is Job—he hath patience; there is Moses—he hath meekness, there are those mighty ones who all have eminent virtues. I will take these, I will put them into one; and the man Christ Jesus shall be the perfect model of future imitation." Now, I say, that all Christ's life he was endeavoring to do his Father's business in this matter. You never find Christ doing a thing which you may not imitate. You would scarcely think it necessary that he should be baptized; but lo, he goes to Jordan's stream and dives beneath the wave, that he may be buried in baptism unto death, and may rise again—though he needed not to rise—into newness of life. You see him healing the sick, to teach us benevolence; rebuking hypocrisy to teach us boldness;

enduring temptation to teach us hardness, wherewith, as good soldiers of Christ, we ought to war a good warfare. You see him forgiving his enemies to teach us the grace of meekness and of forbearance; you behold him giving up his very life to teach us how we should surrender ourselves to God, and give up ourselves for the good of others. Put Christ at the wedding; you may imitate him. Ay, sirs, and you might imitate him, if you could, in turning water into wine, without a sin. Put Christ at a funeral; you may imitate him—"Jesus wept." Put him on the mountain-top; he shall be there in prayer alone, and you may imitate him. Put him in the crowd; he shall speak so, that if you could speak like him you should speak well. Put him with enemies; he shall so confound them, that he shall be a model for you to copy. Put him with friends, and he shall be a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother," worthy of your imitation. Exalt him, cry hosanna, and you shall see him riding upon a "colt, the foal of an ass," meek and lowly. Despise and spit upon him, you shall see him bearing contumely and contempt with the same evenness of spirit which characterised him when he was exalted in the eye of the world Everywhere you may imitate Christ. Ay, sirs, and you may even imitate him in that "the Son of Man came eating and drinking" and therein fulfilled what he determined to do—to pull down the vain pharisaism of man, which saith that religion standeth in meats and drinks, whereas, "Not that which goeth into a man defileth a man but that which goeth out of a man, that defileth the man." And that is wherein we should take heed to ourselves, lest the inner man be defiled. Never once did he swerve from that bright, true mirror of perfection. He was in everything as an exemplar, always doing his Father's business.

2. And so in the matter that I have called establishment, that is the *establishment of a new dispensation*; that was his Father's business, and therein, Christ was always doing it. He went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Was he doing it then? Ah, sirs, he was; for it was necessary that he should be "a faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." When he speaks, you can see him establishing his Word, and when he puts the finger of silence to his lips, he is doing it as much; for then was fulfilled the prophecy, "he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb." Does he work a miracle? Do the obedient winds hush their tumult at his voice? It is to establish the gospel, by teaching us that he is divine. Does he weep? It is to establish the gospel, by teaching us that he is human. Does he gather the apostles? It is that they may go abroad in every land, preaching the Word of God. Does he sit upon a well? It is that he may teach a woman, and that she may teach the whole city of Samaria the way of salvation. He was always engaged in this work of example, and this work of establishment.

3. And ah, beloved, when he came to the climax of his labor, when he came to the greatest toil of all, that which a thousand men could never have done; when he came to do the *great work of expiation*, how thoroughly he did it

“View him prostrate in the garden;

On the ground your Maker lies.

On the bloody tree behold him:

Hear him cry before he dies—

‘IT IS FINISHED!’”

And there you have a proof that he was about his Father’s business. It was his Father’s business made him sweat great drops of blood; his Father’s business ploughed his back with many gory furrows; his Father’s business pricked his temple with the thorn crown; his Father’s business made him mocked and spit upon; his Father’s business made him go about bearing his cross; his Father’s business made him despise the shame when, naked, he hung upon the tree; his Father’s business made him yield himself to death, though he needed not to die if so he had not pleased; his Father’s business made him tread the gloomy shades of Gehenna, and descend into the abodes of death; his Father’s business made him preach to the spirits in prison; and his Father’s business took him up to heaven, where he sitteth on the right hand of God, doing his Father’s business still! His Father’s business makes him plead day and night for Sion; the same business shall make him come as the Judge of quick and dead, to divide the sheep from the goats; the same business shall make him gather together in one, all people who dwell on the face of the earth! Oh, glory to thee, Jesus; thou hast done it! Thou hast done thy Father’s business well.

II. Thus, I have given you the example. Now, let me exhort you to IMITATE IT.

Tell me, if you can why the religion of Christ is so very slow in spreading. Mohomet, an imposter stood up in the streets to preach. He was hooted, stones were thrown at him. Within a month after, he had disciples. A few more years, and he had a host behind him. Not a century had rolled away before a thousand scimitars flashed from their scabbards at the bidding of the caliphs. His religion overran nations like wildfire, and devoured kingdoms. But why? The followers of the prophet were entirely devoted to his cause. When that Moslem of old spurred his horse into the sea, to ride across the straits of Gibraltar, and then reined him up, and said, “I would cross if God willed it! “there was something in it that told us why his religion was so strong. Ah! those warriors of that time were ready to die for their religion, and therefore it spread. Can you tell me why Christianity spread so much in primitive times? It was because holy men “counted not their lives dear unto them,” but were willing to “suffer the loss of all things” for Christ’s sake. Paul traverses many countries, Peter ranges through many nations, Philip and the other evangelists go through various countries, testifying the word of God. Sirs, I will tell you why our faith in these days spreads so little. Pardon me—it is because the professors of it do not believe it! Believe it! Yes; they believe it in the head,

not in the heart. We have not enough of true devotedness to the cause, or else God would bless Sion with a far greater increase, I am fully persuaded. How few there are that have given themselves fully up to their religion! They take their religion, like my friend over there has taken that little farm of his. He has a farm of a thousand acres, but he thinks he could increase his means, perhaps, by taking a little farm of a hundred acres or so a little way off; and he gives that to a bailiff and does not take much trouble about it himself. It is not very likely he will have very fine farming there, because he leaves it to somebody else. Just so with religion. Your great farm is your shop, your great aim is your worldly business. You like to keep religion as a snug investment at very small interest indeed, which you intend to draw out when you get near death; but you do not want to live on it just now. You have enough profit from your own daily business, and you do not want religion for every day life. Sirs, the reason why your religion does not spread is because it has not got root enough in your hearts. How few there are of us who are ready to devote ourselves wholly, bodily, and spiritually to the cause of the gospel of Christ! And if you should attempt to do so, how many opponents you would meet with! Go into the church meeting, and be a little earnest; what will they say? Why, they will serve you just as David's brother did, when David spoke about fighting Goliath. "Oh," he said, "because of the pride and the naughtiness of thine heart, to see the battle thou art come." "Now, stand aside, do not think you can do anything; away with you!" And if you are in earnest, especially in the ministry, it is just the same. Your brethren pray every Sabbath—"Lord, send more laborers into the vineyard!" And if God should send them, they wish them safe out of their corner of it, at any rate. They may go anywhere else, but they must not come anywhere near them, for it might affect their congregation, it might stir them up a little; and people might think they did not labor quite earnestly enough. "Stand aside!" they say. But brethren, do not mind about that. If you cannot bear to be huffed and snuffed, there is little good in you. If you cannot bear snuffing, depend upon it you cannot be well lit yet. Dare to go on against all the prudence of men, and you will find them pat you on the shoulder by-and-by and call you "dear brother." Every man is helped to get up, when he is as high as he can be. If you are down, "keep him down," is the cry; but if you are getting up, you will never get help till you have done it yourself; and then men will give you their help when you do not require it. However, your war-cry must be, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Again, even the best of your friends, if you are truly zealous of God, will come to you and say—and very kindly too—"Now, you must take a little more care of your constitution. Now, don't be doing so much; don't, I beseech you! "Or if you are giving money away—"Now you must be a little more prudent; take more care of your family. Really, you must not do so." Or if you are earnest in prayer, they will say—"There is no need of such enthusiasm as this: you know you can be religious, and not too religious; you can be moderately so." And so you find both friends and enemies striving to hinder your consecration to Christ. Now,

I like what old Rowland Hill said, when some one told him that he was “moderately religious.” “Well then, you are irreligious, for a man that is moderately honest is a rogue for certain; and so the man that is moderately religious is irreligious.” If religion be worth anything it is worth everything; if it be anything it is everything. Religion cannot go halves with anything else, it must be *all*. We must, if we be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, imitate Christ in this—the giving up of all to God; so that we can sincerely say,

“And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I could give him all.”

I shall never forget the circumstance, when after I thought I had made a full consecration to Christ, a slanderous report against my character came to my ears, and my heart was broken in agony because I should have to lose that, in preaching Christ’s gospel I fell on my knees, and said, “Master, I will not keep back even my character for thee. If I must lose that too, then let it go, it is the dearest thing I have, but it shall go, if, like my Master, they shall say I have a devil and am mad; or, like him I am a drunken man and a wine-bibber. It is gone, if I may but say—“I have suffered the loss of all things; and I do count them but dross that I may win Christ!” And you, Christian, will never get on well in serving God, till you have given all to him. That which you keep back will canker, If you reserve the least portion of your time, your property, or your talents, and do not give all to Christ, you will find there will be a sore, a gangrene in it; for Christ will bless you in all when you give all to him; but what you keep from him, he will curse, and blight, and ruin. He will have all of us, the whole of us, all we possess, or else he never will be satisfied.

And now let me answer one or two objections, and I shall still stir you up, who make a profession of religion, to give up all you have to Christ. You say, “*Sir, I cannot do it; I am not in the right profession.*” Well, sir, you spoke truly when you said that; for if there be a profession that will not allow us to give all to Christ, it is not a right profession, and we ought not to follow it at all.” “But,” you say “how can I do it?” Well what are you? I do not care what you are; I assert it is possible for you to do all things in the name of God, and so to give glory to Christ. Do not think you need be a minister to dedicate yourself to Christ. Many a man has disgraced the pulpit, and many a man has sanctified an anvil; many a man has dishonored the cushion upon which he preached, and many a man has consecrated the plough with which he has turned the soil. We ought in all our business, as well as in our sacred acts, to do all for Christ. Let me illustrate this. A merchant in America had devoted a large part of his money for the maintenance of the cause of Christ; and one said to him, “What a sacrifice you make every year.” Said he “Not so. I have a clerk: suppose I give that clerk fifty pounds to pay a schoolmaster, and when he goes to the schoolmaster, he should say, “Here is your salary; what a sacrifice it is to me to give you that! ‘Why,’ the schoolmaster

would say, 'Sir, it is not yours, it is no sacrifice at all to you.'" So said this good man, "I gave up all when I came to God, I became his steward, and no longer head of the firm. I made God the head of the firm, and I became the steward. And now when I distribute of my wealth, I only distribute it as his allmoner; and it is no sacrifice at all." If we talk of sacrifices we make a mistake. Ought not that to be the spirit of our religion? It should be made a sacrifice at first, and then afterwards there should be a voluntary offering of all. "I keep my shop open," said one, "and earn money for God. I and my family live out of it—God allows us to do it; for as a minister lives by the gospel, he allows me to live by my business, and he permits me to provide a competence for old age, but that is not my object." "I sell these goods," said another one, but the profit I get, God has; that which I require for my own food and raiment, and for my household, that God giveth back to me, for he has said, bread shall be given me, and water shall be sure; but the rest is God's not mine; I do it all for God." Now you do not understand that theory, do you? It is not business. No, sirs, but if your hearts were right you would understand it, for it is God's gospel—the giving up all to Christ; the giving up of everything to his cause. When we do that, then shall we understand this passage—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" For your business, though it is carried on in your name, will, unknown to men, be carried on in God's name too. Let me beg of you, however, not to tell everybody, if you do it I have known some that hang the gospel in the window, more attractively, sometimes, than ribbons. I do hate the cant of a man, who, when you go to buy ribbons or pay a bill, asks you to have a tract, or invites you into the beck parlour to pray; you will see at once what he is after. He wants to sanctify his counter, so that as people catch flies with honey, he may catch you with religion. Put your religion where it will come out, but do not cant about it. If a stranger should call upon you, and in a moment exclaim "Let us pray;" your best policy is to let him have the street to do it in, and you should say, "Thank you, I do my praying alone mostly. I see what it is. If I thought you had the spirit of prayer, and it had been the proper season, I would have joined with you with all my heart." But the religion of a man who will just step into your house, to let you see what an extraordinary pious man he is, is either very sick, or else it is a galvanized thing that has got no life in it at all. I regard prayer as a very sacred thing. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou givest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." For verily if you do it to be seen of men you have your reward: and a poor one it is, a little praise for a minute, and it is all gone. But, nevertheless, do not run into one extreme by running from another. Consecrate your business by your religion. Do not paint your religion on your side-board; but keep it ready whenever you want it, and I am sure you will want it always.

Says one, "How can I do God's business? I have no talent, I have no money; all I earn in the week I have to spend, and I have scarce money enough to pay my rent. I have no talent; I could not teach in a Sunday-school." Brother, have you a child? Well, there is one door of

usefulness for you. Sister, you are very poor; no one knows you, you have a husband, and however drunken he may be, there is a door of usefulness for you. Bear up under all his insults, be patient under all his taunts and jeers, and you can serve God, and do God's business so." "But, sir I am sick, it is only to-day I am able to get out at all; I am always on my bed." You can do your Master's business, by lying on a bed of suffering, for him, if you do it patiently. The soldier who is ordered to lie in the trenches, is just as obedient as the man who is ordered to storm the breach. In everything you do you can serve your God. Oh, when the heart is rightly tuned in this matter we shall never make excuses, and say, "I cannot be about my Father's business." We shall always find some business of his to do. In the heroic wars of the Swiss, we read that the mothers would bring cannon-balls for the fathers to fire upon the enemy, and the children would run about and gather up the shot that sometimes fell, when ammunition ran short. So that all did something. We hate war, but we will use the figure in the war of Christ. There is something for you all to do. Oh I let us who love our Master, let us who are bound to serve him by the ties of gratitude let us say, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

And now I close up by addressing all the Lord's people here, and urging them to serve God with all their hearts, by giving them two or three very brief and very earnest reasons.

Be about your Father's business with all earnestness, because that is the way of *usefulness*. You cannot do your own business and God's too. You cannot serve God and self any more than you can serve God and mammon. If you make your own business God's business, you will do your business well; and you will be useful in your day and generation. Never shall we see any great revival in the church, or any great triumphs of religion until the Christian world is more touched with the spirit of entire consecration to Christ. When the world shall see as in earnest then God will bring men in; not before. We go to our pulpits in half heartedness: we go to our place of worship mere shells without the kernel. We give the outward ceremony and take away the heart. We shall never see Christ's cause triumphant so. Would you be useful? Would you extend your Master's empire? Then be about your Father's business.

Again, would you be *happy*? Be about your Father's business. Oh! it is sweet employment to serve your Father. You need not turn aside from the way of business to do that. If your heart be right, you can serve God in weighing a pound of tea as much as in preaching a sermon. You can serve God as much in driving a horse and cart as in singing a hymn—serve God in standing behind your counter. At the right time and the right season, as much as sitting in your pews. And oh, how sweet to think, "I am doing this for God. My shop is opened on God's behalf; I am seeking to win profit for God; I am seeking to get business for God's cause, that I may be able to devote more to it, and prosper it more by what I am able voluntarily to consecrate to him." You will have a happiness when you rise, such as you never knew before, if you can think, "I am going to serve God to-day;" and when you end

at night, instead of saying, "I have lost so much," you will be able to say, "Not I, my God has lost it. But the silver and the gold are his and if he does not care to have either of them—very well; let them go; he shall have it one way or another. I do not want it; if he chooses to take it from me in bad debts, well and good. Let me give to him in another way, it will be the same; I will revere him continually, even in my daily avocations."

And this dear friends, will be the way—and I trust you can be moved by this—this will be the way to have eternal glory at the last, not for the sake of what you do, but as the gracious reward of God for what you have done. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Would you like to go to heaven alone? I do not think you would. My happiest thought is this, that when I die, if it shall be my privilege to enter into rest in the bosom of Christ I know I shall not enter heaven alone. Thousands have been there, whose hearts have been pricked and have been drawn to Christ under the labors of my ministry. Oh! what a pleasant thing to flap one's wings to heaven and have a multitude behind, and when you enter heaven to say, "Here am I and the children thou hast given me! "You cannot preach, perhaps, but you can travail in birth with children for God, in a spiritual sense, in another way; for if you help the cause you shall share the honour too. You do that, perhaps, which is not known among men yet you are the instrument, and God shall crown your head with glory amongst those that "shine as the stars for ever and ever." I think, dear Christian friends, I need say no more, except to bid you remember that you owe so much to Christ for having saved you from hell; you owe so much to that blood which redeemed you—that you are in duty bound to say—

"Here, Lord, I give myself away;
'Tis all that I can do."

Go out now, and if you are tempted by the world, may the Spirit enable you to reply, "I must be about my Father's business." Go out, and if they call you fanatical, let them laugh at you as much as you like, tell them you must be about your Father's business. Go on, and conquer. God be with you. And now farewell, with this last word, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." Faith in Christ is the only way of salvation. Ye who know your guilt cast yourselves on Christ, and then dedicate yourselves to him. So shall you have joy here, and glory everlasting in the kind of the blessed, where bliss is without alloy, and joy without end.

Particular Election

A Sermon

(No. 123)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 22, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—[2 Peter 1:10-11](#).

IT is exceedingly desirable that in the hours of worship and in the house of prayer our minds should be as much as possible divested of every worldly thought. Although the business of the week will very naturally struggle with us to encroach upon the Sabbath, it is our business to guard the Sabbath from the intrusion of our worldly cares, as we would guard an oasis from the overwhelming irruption of the sand. I have felt, however, that to-day we should be surrounded with circumstances of peculiar difficulty in endeavouring to bring our minds to spiritual matters; for that depends upon mental abstraction, election times are the worst. So important in the minds of most men are political matters, that very naturally after the hurry of the week, combined with the engrossing pursuit of elections, we are apt to bring the same thoughts and the same feelings into the house of prayer, and speculate, perhaps, even in the place of worship, whether a conservative or a liberal shall be returned for our borough, or whether for the City of London there shall be returned Lord John Russell, Baron Rothschild, or Mr. Currie. I thought, this morning, Well, it is no use my trying to stop this great train in its progress. People are just now going on at an express rate on these matters; I think I will be wise, and instead of endeavouring to turn them off the line, I will turn the points, so that they may still continue their pursuits with the same swiftness as ever, but in a new direction. It shall be the same line; they shall still be travelling in earnest towards election, but perhaps I may have some skill to turn the points, so that they shall be enabled to consider election in a rather different manner.

When Mr. Whitfield was once applied to to use his influence at a general election, he returned answer to his lordship who requested him, that he knew very little about *general* elections, but that if his lordship took his advice he would make his own *particular* “calling and election sure;” which was a very proper remark. I would not, however, say to any persons here present, despise the privilege which you have as citizens. Far be it from me to do it. When we become Christians we do not leave off being Englishmen; when we become professors of religion we do not cease to have the rights and privileges which citizenship has bestowed on us. Let us, whenever we shall have the opportunity of using the right of voting,

use it as in the sight of Almighty God, knowing that for everything we shall be brought into account, and for that amongst the rest, seeing that we are entrusted with it. And let us remember that we are our own governors, to a great degree, and that if at the next election we should choose wrong governors we shall have nobody to blame but ourselves, however wrongly they may afterwards act, unless we exercise all prudence and prayer to Almighty God to direct our hearts to a right choice in this matter. May God so help us, and may the result be for his glory, however unexpected that result may be to any of us!

Having said so much, let me, then, turn the points, and draw you to a consideration of your own particular calling and election, bidding you in the words of the apostle, “the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” We have here, first of all, *two fundamental points in religion*—“calling and election;” we have here, secondly, *some good advice*—“to make your calling and election *sure*,” or, rather, to assure ourselves that we are *called and elected*; and then, in the third place, we have *some reasons given us why we should use this diligence to be assured of our election*—because, on the one hand, we shall so be kept from falling, and on the other hand, we shall attain unto “an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

I. First of all, then, there are the TWO IMPORTANT MATTERS IN RELIGION—secrets, both of them, to the world—only to be understood by those who have been quickened by divine grace: “CALLING AND ELECTION.”

By the word “calling” in Scripture, we understand two things—one, the *general call*, which in the preaching of the gospel is given to every creature under heaven; the second call (that which is here intended) is the *special call*—which we call the effectual call, whereby God secretly, in the use of means, by the irresistible power of his Holy Spirit, calls out of mankind a certain number, whom he himself hath before elected, calling them from their sins to become righteous, from their death in trespasses and sins to become living spiritual men, and from their worldly pursuits to become the lovers of Jesus Christ. The two callings differ very much. As Bunyan puts it, very prettily. “By his common call, he gives nothing; by his special call, he always has something to give; he has also a brooding voice, for them that are under his wing; and he has an outcry, to give the alarm when he seeth the enemy come.” What we have to obtain, as absolutely necessary to our salvation, is a special calling, made in us, not to our ears but to our hearts, not to our mere fleshly understanding, but to the inner man, by the power of the Spirit. And then the other important thing is election. As without calling there is no salvation, so without election there is no calling. Holy Scripture teaches us that God hath from the beginning chosen us who are saved unto holiness through Jesus Christ. We are told that as many as are ordained unto eternal life believe, and that their believing is the effect of their being ordained to eternal life from before all worlds.

However much this may be disputed, as it frequently is, you must first deny the authenticity and full inspiration of the Holy Scripture before you can legitimately and truly deny it. And since, without doubt, I have many here who are members of the Episcopal church, allow me to say to them what I have often said before, “You, of all men, are the most inconsistent in the world, unless you believe the doctrine of election, for if it be not taught in Scripture there is this one thing for an absolute certainty, it is taught in your Articles.” Nothing can be more forcibly expressed, nothing more definitely laid down, than the doctrine of predestination in the Book of Common Prayer; although we are told what we already know, that that doctrine is a high mystery, and is only to be handled carefully by men who are enlightened. However, without doubt, it is the doctrine of Scripture, that those who are saved are saved because God chose them to be saved, and are called as the effect of that first choice of God. If any of your dispute this, I stand upon the authority of Holy Scripture; ay, and if it were necessary to appeal to tradition, which I am sure it is not, and no Christian man would ever do it, yet I would take you upon that point; for I can trace this doctrine through the lips of a succession of holy men, from this present moment to the days of Calvin, thence to Augustine, and thence on to Paul himself; and even to the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine is, without doubt, taught in Scripture, and were not men too proud to humble themselves to it, it would universally be believed and received as being no other than manifest truth. Why, sirs, do you not believe that God loves his children? and do you not know that God is unchangeable? therefore, if he loves them now he must always have loved them. Do you not believe that if men be saved God saves them? And if so, can you see any difficulty in admitting that because he saves them there must have been a purpose to save them—a purpose which existed before all worlds? Will you not grant me that? If you will not, I must leave you to the Scriptures themselves; and if they will not convince you on the point, then I must leave you unconvinced.

It will be asked, however, why is *calling* here put before *election*, seeing election is eternal, and calling takes place in time? I reply, because calling is first to us. The first thing which you and I can know is our calling; we cannot tell whether we are elect until we feel that we are called. We must, first of all, prove our calling, and then our election is sure most certainly. “Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Calling comes first in our apprehension. We are by God’s Spirit called from our evil estate, regenerated and made new creatures, and then, looking backward, we behold ourselves as being most assuredly elect because we were called.

Here, then, I think I have explained the text. There are the two things which you and I are to prove to be sure to ourselves—whether we are *called* and whether we are *elected*. And oh, dear friends, this is a matter about which you and I should be very anxious. For consider what an *honourable* thing it is to be elected. In this world it is thought a mighty thing to be

electd to the House of Parliament; but how much more honourable to be electd to eternal life; to be electd to “the Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven;” to be electd to be a compeer of angels, to be a favorite of the living God, to dwell with the Most High, amongst the fairest of the sons of light, nearest the eternal throne! Election in this world is but a short-lived thing, but God’s election is *eternal*. Let a man be electd to a seat in the House: seven years must be the longest period that he can hold his election; but if you and I be electd according to the Divine purpose, we shall hold our seats when the day-star shall have ceased to burn, when the sun shall have grown dim with age, and when the eternal hills shall have bowed themselves with weakness. If we be chosen of God and precious, then are we chosen for ever; for God changeth not in the objects of his election. Those whom he hath ordaind he hath ordaind to eternal life, “and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand.” It is worth while to know ourselves elect, for nothing in this world can make a man more *happy* or more valiant than the knowledge of his election. “Nevertheless,” said Christ to his apostles, “rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven”—that being the sweetest comfort, the honeycomb that droppeth with the most precious drops of all, the knowledge of our being chosen by God. And this, too, beloved, makes a man *valiant*. When a man by diligence has attained to the assurance of his election, you cannot make him a coward, you can never make him cry craven even in the thickest battle; he holds the standard fast and firm, and cleaves his foes with the scimitar of truth. “Was not I ordaind by God to be the standard bearer of this truth? I must, I will stand by it, despite you all.” He saith to every enemy, “Am I not a chosen king? Can floods of water wash out the sacred unction from a king’s bright brow? No, never! And if God hath chosen me to be a king and a priest unto God for ever and ever, come what may or come what will—the lion’s teeth, the fiery furnace, the spear, the rack, the stake, all these things are less than nothing, seeing I am chosen of God unto salvation.” It has been said that the doctrine of necessity makes men weak. It is a lie. It may seem so in theory, but in practice it has always been found to be the reverse. The men who have believed in destiny, and have held fast and firm by it, have always done the most valiant deeds. There is one point in which this is akin even with Mahomet’s faith. The deeds that were done by him were chiefly done from a firm confidence that God had ordaind him to his work. Never had Cromwell driven his foes before him if it had not been in the stern strength of this almost omnipotent truth; and there shall scarcely be found a man strong to do great and valiant deeds unless, confident in the God of Providence, he looks upon the accidents of life as being steered by God, and gives himself up to God’s firm predestination, to be borne along by the current of his will, contrary to all the wills and all the wishes of the world. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

II. Come, then, here is the second point—GOOD ADVICE. “Make your calling and election sure.” Not towards God, for they are sure to him: make them sure to yourself. Be

quite certain of them; be fully satisfied about them. In many of our dissenting places of worship very great encouragement is held out to doubting. A person comes before the pastor, and says, "Oh! sir, I am so afraid I am not converted; I tremble lest I should not be a child of God. Oh! I fear I am not one of the Lord's elect." The pastor will put out his hands to him, and say, "Dear brother, you are all right so long as you can doubt." Now, I hold, that is altogether wrong. Scripture never says, "He that doubteth shall be saved," but "He that believeth." It may be true that the man is in a good state; it may be true that he wants a little comfort; but his doubts are not good things, nor ought we to encourage him in his doubts. Our business is to encourage him out of his doubts, and by the grace of God to urge him to "give *all* diligence to make his calling and election *sure*;" not do doubt it, but to be sure of it. Ah! I have heard some hypocritical doubters say, "Oh! I have had such doubts whether I am the Lord's," and I have thought to myself, "And so have I very great doubts about you." I have heard some say they do tremble so because they are afraid they are not the Lord's people; and the lazy fellows sit in their pews on the Sunday, and just listen to the sermon; but they never think of giving diligence, they never do good, perhaps are inconsistent in their lives, and then talk about doubting. It is quite right they should doubt, it is well they should; and if they did not doubt we might begin to doubt for them. Idle men have no right to assurance. The Scripture says, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

Full assurance is an excellent attainment. It is profitable for a man to be certain in this life, and absolutely sure of his own calling and election. But how can he be sure? Now, many of our more ignorant hearers imagine that the only way they have of being assured of their election is by some revelation, some dream, and some mystery. I have enjoyed very hearty laughs as the expense of some people who have trusted in their visions. Really, if you had passed among so many shades of ignorant professing Christians as I have; and had to resolve so many doubts and fears, you would be so infinitely sick of dreams and visions that you would say, as soon as a person began to speak about them, "Now, do just hold your tongue." "Sir," said a woman, "I saw blue lights in the front parlour when I was in prayer, and I thought I saw the Saviour in the corner, and I said to myself I am safe." (Mr. Spurgeon here narrated a remarkable story of a poor woman who was possessed with a singular delusion.) And yet there are tens of thousands of people in every part of the country, and members too of Christians bodies, who have no better ground for their belief that they are called and elected, than some vision equally ridiculous, or the equally absurd hearing of a voice. A young woman came to me some time ago; she wanted to join the church, and when I asked her how she knew herself to be converted, she said she was down at the bottom of the garden, and she thought she heard a voice, and she thought she saw something up in the clouds that said to her so-and-so. "Well," I said to her, "that thing may have been the means of doing good to you, but if you put any trust in it, it is all over with you." A dream, ay, and a vision, may often bring men to Christ; I have known many who have been brought to him by them,

beyond a doubt, though it has been mysterious to me how it was; but when men bring these forward as a proof of their conversion, *there* is the mistake; because you may see fifty thousand dreams and fifty thousand visions, and you may be a fool for all that, and all the bigger sinner for having seen them. There is better evidence to be had than all this: “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

“How, then,” says one, “am I to make my calling and election sure?” Why, thus:—If thou wouldst get out of a doubting state, get out of an idle state; if thou wouldst get out of a trembling state, get out of an indifferent lukewarm state; for lukewarmness and doubting, and laziness and trembling, very naturally go hand in hand. If thou wouldst enjoy the eminent grace of the full assurance of faith under the blessed Spirit’s influence and assistance, do what the Scripture tells thee—“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Wherein shalt thou be diligent? Note how the Scripture has given us a list. Be diligent in your *faith*. Take care that your faith is of the right kind—that it is not a creed, but a credence—that it is not a mere belief of doctrine, but a reception of doctrine into your heart, and the practical light of the doctrine in your soul. Take care that your faith results from necessity—that you believe in Christ because you have nothing else to believe in. Take care it is simple faith, hanging alone on Christ, without any other dependence but Jesus Christ and him crucified. And when thou hast given diligence about that, give diligence next to thy *courage*. Labour to get *virtue*; plead with God that he would give thee the face of a lion, that thou mayest never be afraid of any enemy, however much he may jeer or threaten thee, but that thou mayest with a consciousness of right, go on, boldly trusting in God. And having, by the help of the Holy Spirit, obtained that, study well the Scriptures, and get *knowledge*; for a knowledge of doctrine will tend very much to confirm your faith. Try to understand God’s Word; get a sensible, spiritual idea of it. Get, if you can, a system of divinity out of God’s Bible. Put the doctrines together. Get real, theological knowledge, founded upon the infallible word. Get a knowledge of that science which is most despised, but which is the most necessary of all, the science of Christ and him crucified, and of the great doctrines of grace. And when thou hast done this, “Add to thy knowledge *temperance*.” Take heed to thy body: be temperate there. Take heed to thy soul: be temperate there. Be not drunken with pride; be not lifted up with self-confidence. Be temperate. Be not harsh towards thy friends, nor bitter to thine enemies. Get temperance of lip, temperance of life, temperance of heart, temperance of thought. Be not passionate: be not carried away by every wind of doctrine. Get temperance, and then add to it by God’s Holy Spirit *patience*; ask him to give thee that patience which endureth affliction, which, when it is tried, shall come forth as gold. Array yourself with patience, that you may not murmur in your sicknesses; that you may not curse God in your losses, nor be depressed in your afflictions. Pray, without ceasing, until the Holy Ghost has nerved you with patience to endure unto the end. And when you have that, get *godliness*. Godliness is something more than religion. The most religious men

may be the most godless men, and sometimes a godly man may seem to be irreligious. Let me just explain that seeming paradox. A real *religious* man is a man who sighs after sacraments, attends churches and chapels, and is outwardly good, but goes not farther. A godly man is a man who does not look so much to the dress as to the person: he looks not to the outward form, but to the inward and spiritual grace, he is a godly man, as well as attentive to religion. Some men, however, are godly, and to a great extent despise form; they may be godly, without some degree of religion; but a man cannot be fully righteous without being godly in the true meaning of each of these words, though not in the general vulgar sense of them. Add to thy patience an eye to God; live in his sight; dwell close to him; seek for fellowship with him; and thou hast got godliness. And then to that add *brotherly love*. Be loving towards all the members of Christ's church; have a love to all the saints, of every denomination. And then add to that *charity*, which openeth its arms to all men, and loves them; and when you have got all these, then you will know your calling and election, and just in proportion as you practise these heavenly rules of life, in this heavenly manner, will you come to know that you are called and that you are elect. But by no other means can you attain to a knowledge of that, except by the witness of the Spirit, bearing witness with your spirit that you are born of God, and then witnessing in your conscience that you are not what you were, but are a new man in Christ Jesus, and are therefore called and therefore elected.

A man over there says he is elect. He gets drunk. Ay, you are elect by the devil, sir; that is about your only election. Another man says, "Blessed be God, I don't care about evidences a bit; I am not so legal as you are!" No, I dare say you are not; but you have no great reason to bless God about it, for, my dear friend, unless you have these evidences of a new birth take heed to yourself. "God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Well," says another, "but I think that doctrine of election a very licentious doctrine." Think on as long as you please; but please to bear me witness that as I have preached it today there is nothing licentious about it. Very likely you are licentious, and you would make the doctrine licentious, if you believed it; but "to the pure all things are pure." He who receiveth God's truth in his heart doth not often pervert it and turn aside from it unto wicked ways. No man, let me repeat, has any right to believe himself called, unless his life be in the main consistent with his vocation, and he walk worthy of that whereunto he is called. Out upon an election that lets you live in sin! Away with it! away with it! That was never the design of God's Word; and it never was the doctrine of Calvinists either. Though we have been lied against and our teachings perverted, we have always stood by this—that good works, though they do not procure nor in any degree merit salvation, yet are the necessary evidences of salvation; and unless they be in men the soul is still dead, uncalled and unrenewed. The nearer you live to Christ, the more you imitate him, the more your life is conformed to him, and the more simply you hang upon him by faith, the more certain you may be of your election in Christ and of your calling by his Holy Spirit. May the Holy One of

Israel give you the sweet assurance of grace, by affording you “tokens for good” in the graces which he enables you to manifest.

III. And now I shall close up by giving you THE APOSTLE’S REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.

I put in one of my own to begin with. It is because, as I have said, *it will make you so happy*. Men who doubt their calling and election cannot be full of joy; but the happiest saints are those who know and believe it. You know our friends say this is a howling wilderness, and you know my reply to it is, that they make all the howling themselves: there would not be much howling, if they were to look up a little more and look down a little less, for by faith they would make it blossom like the rose, and give to it the excellence and glory of Carmel and Sharon. But why they howl so much is because they do not believe. Our happiness and our faith are to a great degree proportionate; they are Siamese twins to the Christian; they must flourish or decay together.

“When I can say my God is mine,
Then I can all my griefs resign;
Can tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great.”

But ah

“When gloomy doubts prevail,
I fear to call him mine;
The streams of comfort seem to fail,
And all my hopes decline.”

Only faith can make a Christian lead a happy life.

But now for Peter’s reasons. First, because “*if ye do these things ye shall never fall.*” “Perhaps,” says one, “in attention to election we may forget our daily walk, and like the old philosopher who looked up to the stars we may walk on and tumble into the ditch!” “Nay, nay,” says Peter, “if you take care of your calling and election, you shall not trip; but, with your eyes up there, looking for your calling and election, God will take care of your feet, and you shall never fall. Is it not very notable, that, in many churches and chapels, you do not often hear a sermon about *to-day*; it is always either about old eternity, or else about the millennium; either about what God did before man was made, or else about what God will do when all are dead and buried? Pity they do not tell us something about what we are to do to-day, now, in our daily walk and conversation! Peter removes this difficulty. He says, “This point is a practical point; for you can only answer your election for yourself by taking care of your practice; whilst you are so taking care of your practice and assuring yourself of your election, you are doing the best possible thing to keep you from falling.” And is it not desirable that a true Christian should be kept from falling? Mark the difference between *falling* and *falling away*. The true believer can never fall away and perish; but he may fall

and injure himself. He shall not fall and break his neck; but a broken leg is bad enough, without a broken neck. "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down;" but that is no reason why he should dash himself against a stone. His desire is, that day by day he may grow more holy; that hour by hour he may be more thoroughly renewed, until conformed to the image of Christ, he may enter into bliss eternal. If, then, you take care of your calling and election, you are doing the best thing in the world to prevent you from falling; for in so doing you shall never fall.

And, now, the other reason, and then I shall have almost concluded. "*For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" An "abundant entrance" has sometimes been illustrated in this way. You see yonder ship. After a long voyage, it has neared the haven, but is much injured; the sails are rent to ribbons, and it is in such a forlorn condition that it cannot come up to the harbour: a steam-tug is pulling it in with the greatest possible difficulty. That is like the righteous being "scarcely saved." But do you see that other ship? It has made a prosperous voyage; and now, laden to the water's edge, with the sails all up and with the white canvass filled with the wind, it rides into the harbour joyously and nobly. That is an "abundant entrance;" and if you and I are helped by God's Spirit to add to our faith virtue, and so on, we shall have at the last "an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." There is a man who is a Christian; but, alas! there are many inconsistencies in his life for which he has to mourn. He lies there, dying on his bed. The thought of his past life rushes upon him. He cries, "O Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner," and the prayer is answered; his faith is in Christ, and he shall be saved. But oh! what griefs he has upon his bed. "Oh, if I had served my God better! And these children of mine—if I had but trained them up better, 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!' I am saved," says he; "but alas, alas! though it be a great salvation, I cannot enjoy it yet. I am dying in gloom, and clouds, and darkness. I trust, I hope I shall be gathered to my fathers, but I have no works to follow me—or very few indeed; for though I am saved, I am but just saved—saved 'so as by fire.'" Here is another one; he too is dying. Ask him what his dependence is: he tells you, "I rest in none else but Jesus." But mark him as he looks back to his past life. "In such a place," says he, "I preached the gospel, and God helped me." And though with no pride about him—he will not congratulate himself upon what he has done—yet doth he lift up hands to heaven, and he blesses God that throughout a long life he has been able to keep his garments white; that he has served his Master; and now, like a shock of corn fully ripe, he is about to be gathered into his Master's garner. Hark to him! It is not the feeble lisp of the trembler; but with "victory, victory, victory!" for his dying shout, he shuts his eyes, and dies like a warrior in his glory. That is the "abundant entrance." Now, the man that "give diligence to make his calling and election sure," shall ensure for himself "an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What a terrible picture is hinted at in these words of the apostle—“Saved so as by fire!” Let me try and present it to you. The man has come to the edge of Jordan; the time has arrived for him to die. He is a believer—just a believer; but his life has not been what he could wish; not all that he now desires that it had been. And now stern death is at him, and he has to take his first step into the Jordan. Judge of his horror, when the flames surround his foot. He treads upon the hot sand of the stream; and the next step he takes, with his hair well nigh on end, with his eye fixed on heaven on the other side of the shore, his face is yet marked with horror. He takes another step, and he is all bathing in fire. Another step, and he is up to his very loins in flames—“saved, so as by fire.” A strong hand has grasped him, that drags him onward through the stream. But how dreadful must be the death even of the Christian, when he is saved “so as by fire!” There on the river’s brink, astonished he looks back and sees the liquid flames, through which he has been called to walk, as a consequence of his indifference in this life. Saved he is—thanks to God; and his heaven shall be great, and his crown shall be golden, and his harp shall be sweet, and his hymns shall be eternal, and his bliss unfading;—but his dying moment, the last article of death, was blackened by sin; and he was saved “so as by fire!” Mark the other man; he too has to die. He has often feared death. He dips the first foot in Jordan; and his body trembles, his pulse waxes faint, and even his eyes are well nigh closed. His lips can scarcely speak, but still he says, “Jesus, thou art with me, thou art with me, passing through the stream!” He takes another step, and the waters now begin to refresh him. He dips his hand and tastes the stream, and tells those who are watching him in tears, that to die is blessed. “The stream is sweet,” he says, “it is not bitter: it is blessed to die.” Then he takes another step, and when he is well nigh submerged in the stream, and lost to vision, he says—

“And when ye hear my eyestrings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!—
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!”

That is the “abundant entrance” of the man who has manfully served his God—who, by divine grace, has had a path unclouded and serene—who, by diligence, has “made his calling and election sure;” and therefore, as a reward, not of debt, but of grace, hath entered heaven with higher honors and with greater ease than others equally saved, but not saved in so splendid a manner.

Just one thought more. It is said that the entrance is to be “ministered to us.” That gives me a sweet hint that, I find, is dwelt upon by Doddridge. Christ will open the gates of heaven; but the heavenly train of virtues—the works which follow us—will go up with us and minister an entrance to us. I sometimes think, if God should enable me to live and die for the good of these congregations, so that many of them shall be saved, how sweet it will be to enter heaven, and when I shall come there, to have an entrance ministered to me, not

by Christ alone, but by some of you for whom I have ministered. One shall meet me at the gate, and say, "Minister, thou wast the cause of my salvation!" And another, and another, and another, shall all exclaim the same. When Whitfield entered heaven—that highly honoured servant of the Lord—I think I can see the hosts rushing to the gate to meet him. There are thousands there that have been brought to God by him. Oh how they open wide the gates; and how they praise God that he has been the means of bringing them to heaven; and how do they minister unto him an abundant entrance? There will be some of you, perhaps, in heaven, with starless crowns: for you never did good to your fellow-creatures; you never were the means of saving souls; you are to have crowns without stars. But "they that turn many to righteousness," shall "shine as the stars, for ever and ever;" and an entrance shall be abundantly ministered to them. I do want to get a heavy crown in heaven—not to wear, but to have all the more costly gift to give to Christ. And you ought to desire the same, that you may have all the more honours, and so have the more to cast at his feet, with—"Not unto us, but unto thy name, O Christ, be the glory!" "Rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

And now, to conclude. There are some of you with whom this text has nothing to do. You cannot "make your calling and election sure;" for you have not been called; and you have no right to believe that you are elected, if you have never been called. To such of you, let me say, do not ask whether you are elected first, but ask whether you are called. And go to God's house, and bend your knee in prayer; and may God, in his infinite mercy, call you! And mark this—If any of you can say—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;"

if any of you, abjuring your self-righteousness, can now come to Christ and take him to be your all in all; you are called, you are elect. "Make your calling and election sure," and go on your way rejoicing! May God bless you; and to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be glory for evermore! Amen.

The Snare of the Fowler

A Sermon

(No. 124)

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”—[Psalm 91:3](#).

If Moses wrote this Psalm he might represent the fowler as being in his case the king of Egypt, who sought to slay him, or the Amalekites, who pounced upon Israel in the plain, when they little expected it. If David penned it, he might have compared Saul to the fowler, for he himself says, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. But we believe, if the verse be applicable to either of those cases, it was intended by the Psalmist not to have a private interpretation, but to be applicable to all time; and we believe it is spoken concerning that arch-enemy of souls, the great deceiver, Satan, of whom we just now sang,

“Satan, the fowler, who betrays

Unguarded souls a thousand ways.”

“The prince of the power of this world, the spirit which still worketh in the children of disobedience,” is like a fowler, always attempting to destroy us. It was once said by a talented writer, that the old devil was dead, and that there was a new devil now; by which he meant to say, that the devil of old times was a rather different devil from the deceiver of these times. We believe that it is the same evil spirit; but there is a difference in his mode of attack. The devil of five hundred years ago was a black and grimy thing well portrayed in our old pictures of that evil spirit. He was a persecutor, who cast men into the furnace, and put them to death for serving Christ. The devil of this day is a well-spoken gentleman: he does not persecute—he rather attempts to persuade and to beguile. He is not now so much the furious Romanist, so much as the insinuating unbeliever, attempting to overturn our religion, while at the same time he pretends he would make it more rational, and so more triumphant. He would only link worldliness with religion; and so he would really make religion void, under the cover of developing the great power of the gospel, and bringing out secrets which our forefathers had never discovered. Satan is always a fowler. Whatever his tactics may be, his object is still the same—to catch men in his net. Men are here compared to silly, weak birds, that have not skill enough to avoid the snare, and have not strength enough to escape from it. Satan is the fowler; he has been so and is so still; and if he does not now attack us as the roaring lion, roaring against us in persecution, he attacks us as the adder, creeping silently along the path, endeavoring to bite our heel with his poisoned fangs, and weaken the power of grace and ruin the life of godliness within us. Our text is a very comforting one to all be-

lievers, when they are beset by temptation. "Surely he shall deliver them from the snare of the fowler."

First, *a few words concerning the snare of the fowler*; secondly, *the deliverance*; and, thirdly, *the certainty of it*; dwelling upon that word *surely*, for it seems to be the diamond wherewith this precious golden promise is embellished. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

I. First, then, THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER. It is an illustration too suggestive for me thoroughly to unravel. I must leave it for your meditations at home to enumerate the divers ways in which a fowler attempts to take his birds, and then you will have suggested to you the divers means which the evil spirit employs for the destruction of souls. Allow me, however, just to begin, and pass over two or three points connected with the fowler and with the evil one.

1. First, *the fowler's snare is intimately connected with secrecy*. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Therefore the fowler carefully covers up his trap; or, if the trap itself be uncovered he doth well beguile the bird, so that it is utterly ignorant of his intention to take it in the trap, little thinking that the food laid there for its banqueting is really placed there for its enticement and destruction. The fowler, when he goes after his birds, is very careful lest they should discover him. We hear, for instance, that in the taking of wild ducks, in Lincolnshire, a man will hold before his mouth a piece of turf, in order that the smell of his breath may not be perceived by the birds, who are exceedingly wary. The temptations of the world are of this secret sort to a Christian, though not to the wicked man, for the wicked man sins with his eyes wide open; dashing into the net knowing it is a net, laying hold of iniquity with both his hands, even when destruction stareth him in the face. He will commit a sin that he knows is condemned even by the law of the land; he will rush into a crime, concerning the guilt of which no doubt can be entertained. Not so the Christian: he is taken by secrecy. "Ah!" says one, "if I thought such-and-such a thing were really wrong; if I were perfectly convinced of its wrongfulness, I would give it up." It is just there the difficulty lies. So would the bird say: "If I thought that really were a trap, I would not enter it; if I were perfectly persuaded that net would entangle me, I would not fly to such-and-such a spot; I would not approach there at all, if I were sure it would be my destruction." How many a professor there is who asks the question, "May I go to this place? May I go to that place?" and some of us answer "No," and we are called Puritans for it; but let those who have attempted to keep their godliness intact, while they pursued the pleasures of this world, stand up and make the mournful confession, that the healthiness of the two things can never exist together. We must either serve God wholly, or serve the evil one wholly. "If God be God, serve him; If Baal be God, serve him." One, or else the other. Many a man has been entrapped into sin by Satan; not knowing that it was evil! Some one has hinted to him in business, for instance—"You may very safely do such-and-such a thing; all the shopkeepers

in the street have done it; it is not actually dishonest; it improves the article, it really does; and although you can thus sell an article at a dearer rate than you ought to sell it, yet you need not tell the public; and if the article is all the better for it, it is quite fair and safe that you should adulterate it.” And so the good easy man, not opening both his eyes, I think, but shutting one of them a little, lest he should see too well to be able to fill his pockets in the dark, is a little taken aside; and by-and-by he is led to discover that the act which he has done is the taking of him in the snare of the fowler, for he has been sinning against his God, and his God therefore punishes him for it with many stripes, and lays his rod upon him. I do not think that a Christian is so often betrayed into a sin that is palpable and known, as he is into a sin that is secret. If the devil comes to my door with his horns visible, I will never let him in; but if he comes with his hat on as a respectable gentleman, he is at once admitted. The metaphor may be very quaint, but it is quite true. Many a man has taken in an evil thing, because it has been varnished and glossed over, and not apparently an evil; and he has thought in his heart, there is not much harm in it; so he has let in the little thing, and it has been like the breaking forth of water—the first drop has brought after it a torrent. The beginning has been but the beginning of a fearful end. Take care, Christian, of things that are secret; take care of the common doings of the world, which are well enough for them, perhaps. We would not deny them their pleasures, for they have no others; but they are not good for you, for you have a finer life—a life of a finer texture and order than can exist in the haunts of ungodly persons. Remember, you are not to be a judge for others. Some men, especially those who are unconverted, can, without being led into sin, indulge in many gayeties and merriments; but the Christian is like the Englishman, who can not hope to survive long where the jungle fever reigns. The native can live there, but he can not. And so you who are twice-born men will find your piety ruined, by that which, to a worldly man, does not lead him into greater evil than that which he would naturally commit. You are to have a stricter rule on yourselves than others, and are to be more stern in your piety than the world would have you be; for sin is usually hidden, and the snare is not often made apparent. “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

2. In the second place, *the snare of the fowler is generally noted for its adaptation*. You do not find a fowler setting the same snare for one bird as for another; he knows his bird and he adapts his bait to it. He would be an unwise fowler who should go to work with the same machinery to catch the lark that flies on high as the duck that swims along the stream. The fowler is wiser than that: he adapts his snare to the condition of the bird which he desires to take. Satan the fowler does just the same. There is one man here; he tempts him to drunkenness. Perhaps that would naturally be his sin, if left without grace in his heart; and Satan, knowing it to be his weak point, attempts to overcome him by surfeiting, gluttony, and drunkenness. Another man is utterly impervious to any temptation to that bestial habit; but, it may be, he is easily taken in another snare—the snare of lust; therefore Satan adapts

his temptation to the hot blood of the man who naturally would be inclined to live a life of sin. Another one perhaps eschews every lascivious and sensual habit; then Satan comes to him, and adapts his temptation to the shape of pride. The man is naturally a melancholy man, full of solitude; Satan gets him, if he can, to wrap himself up in a solitary dignity, to say, "I am holy." "Lord, I thank thee, I am not as other men are." Or if a man is not naturally inclined to a very high degree of pride, Satan takes him with sloth. The man likes an easy life; Satan therefore adapts his bait to him by letting him sit still, fold his arms, and so perish by slothfulness: and mark this, he who sitteth still in the frost, when the snow is on the ground, in the depths of the wild regions of the frozen zone, must as surely perish by his idleness as if he drove a dagger to his heart. Satan knows that, and so adapts his bait accordingly. O! how often it happens, beloved, that you and I condemn a thing in another person which we allow in ourselves, perhaps without knowing it. We say of such a one, How proud he is! Well, our pride is not exactly of that shape; we have got another shaped pride, but the same article; labeled differently, but the same thing. Satan adapts the pride to each particular case. We are rich: he does not perhaps tempt us to the pride of riches, but he tempts us to the pride of mastership, and makes us harsh masters to our servants. Or if he does not tempt us to that pride, he perhaps enchants us with the pride of generosity, and we are apt to boast of our kindness and of what we have given away. He will always adapt his trap to his man, and his bait to his bird. He will not tempt you all with the same temptation he would tempt me with; nor me with the temptation with which he would naturally assail another. "The snare of the fowler." A cunning enemy we have to deal with; he knows our weak points; he has been dealing with men for these last six thousand years; he knows all about them. He is possessed of a gigantic intellect; though he be a fallen spirit and he is easily able to discover where our sore places are, and there it is he immediately attacks us. If we be like Achilles, and can not be wounded anywhere but in our heel, then at the heel he will send his dart, and nowhere else. He will find out our easily besetting sin, and there, if he can, he will attempt to work our ruin and our destruction. Let us bless God that it is written, "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

3. In the next place, *the fowler's snare is frequently connected with pleasure, profit, and advantage*. In the bird's case it is for the seed scattered on the ground that he flies to the snare. It is some tempting bait which allures him to his death. And usually Satan; the fowler, uses a temptation wherewith to beguile us. "O!" says one, "I can not give up such-and-such a thing, it is so pleasant. Sir, you never knew the charms of such-and-such a pursuit, otherwise you could never advise me to relinquish it." Yes, my friend, but it is just the sweetness of it to you that makes it the more dangerous. Satan never sells his poisons naked; he always gilds them before he vends them. He knows very well that men will buy them and swallow them, if he does but gild them beforehand. Take care of pleasures; mind what you are at when you are at them. Many of them are innocent and healthful, but many of them are de-

structive. It is said that where the most beautiful cacti grow, there the most venomous serpents are to be found at the root of every plant. And it is so with sin. Your fairest pleasures will harbor your grossest sins. Take care; take care of your pleasures. Cleopatra's asp was introduced in a basket of flowers; so are our sins often brought to us in the flowers of our pleasures. Satan offers to the drunkard the sweetness of the intoxicating cup, which rejoices him, when his brain is rioting in frolic, and when his soul is lifted up within him. He offers to the lustful man the scenes and pleasures of carnal mirth, and merriment, and delight, and so he leadeth him astray with the bait, concealing the hook which afterwards shall pain him. He gives to you and to me, each of us, the offer of our peculiar joy; he tickleth us with pleasures, that he may lay hold upon us, and so have us in his power. I would have every Christian be especially on his guard against the very thing that is most pleasing to his human nature. I would not have him avoid every thing that pleases him, but I would have him be on his guard against it. Just like Job, when his sons had been feasting in their houses. He did not forbid them doing it, but he said, "I will offer a sacrifice, lest my sons should have sinned in their hearts, and should have cursed God foolishly." He was more careful over them at the time of their feasting than at any other season. Let us be the same. Let us remember that the snare of the fowler is generally connected with some pretended pleasure or profit, but that Satan's end is not our pleasing, but our destruction.

4. In the next place, *sometimes the fowler very wisely employs the force of example*. We all know the influence of the decoy-duck, in endeavoring to bring others into the snare. How very often Satan, the fowler, employs a decoy to lead God's people into sin! You get with a man; you think him to be a true Christian; you have some respect for his character; he is a high professor, can talk religion by the yard, and can give you any quantity of theology you like to ask for. You see him commit a sin; ten to one but you will do the same, if you have much respect for him; and so he will lead you on. And mark, Satan is very careful in the men whom he chooses to be decoys. He never employs a wicked man to be a decoy for a good man. It is very seldom, when Satan would decoy a Christian into a snare, that he makes use of an open reprobate. No; he makes use of a man who is pretendedly religious, and who looks to be of the same quality as yourself, and therefore entices you astray. Let a bad man meet me in the street, and ask me to commit sin! The devil knows better than to set him at any such work as that, because he knows I should pass by directly. If he wants his errand well done, he sends one to me whom I call brother; and so through the brotherhood of profession I am apt to give him credence and pay him respect; and then if he goeth astray, the force of example is very powerful, and so I may easily be led into the net too. Take care of your best friends; be careful of your companions. Choose the best you can; then follow them no further than they follow Christ. Let your course be entirely independent of every one else. Say with Joshua, let others do what they will, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

5. Note, once more, that *sometimes the fowler, when he faileth to take his bird by deceit and craft, will go a hawking after it*—will send his hawk into the air, to bring down his prey. It often happens, when the devil can not ruin a man by getting him to commit a sin, he attempts to slander him; he sends a hawk after him, and tries to bring him down by slandering his good name. I will give you a piece of advice. I know a good minister, now in venerable old age, who was once most villainously lied against and slandered by a man who had hated him only for the truth's sake. The good man was grieved; he threatened the slanderer with a lawsuit, unless he apologized. He did apologize. The slander was printed in the papers in a public apology; and you know what was the consequence. The slander was more believed than if he had said nothing about it. And I have learned this lesson—to do with the slanderous hawk what the little birds do, just fly up. The hawk can not do them any hurt while they can keep above him—it is only when they come down that he can injure them. It is only when by mounting he gets above the birds, that the hawk comes sweeping down upon them, and destroys them. If any slander you, do not come down to them; let them slander on. Say, as David said concerning Shimei, “If the Lord hath given him commandment to curse, let him curse;” and if the sons of Zeruiah say, “Let us go and take this dead dog's head,” you say, “Nay, let him curse;” and in that way you will live down slander. If some of us turned aside to notice every bit of a sparrow that began chirping at us, we should have nothing to do but to answer them. If I were to fight people on every doctrine I preach, I should do nothing else but just amuse the devil, and indulge the combative principles of certain religionists who like nothing better than quarreling. By the grace of God, say what you please against me, I will never answer you, but go straight on. All shall end well, if the character be but kept clean; the more dirt that is thrown on it by slander, the more its shall glisten, and the more brightly it shall shine. Have you never felt your fingers itch sometimes to be at a man who slanders you? I have. I have sometimes thought, “I can not hold my tongue now; I must answer that fellow;” but I have asked of God grace to imitate Jesus, who, “when he was reviled, reviled not again,” and by his strength let them go straight on. The surest way in the world to get rid of a slander is just to let it alone and say nothing about it, for if you prosecute the rascal who utters it, or if you threaten him with an action, and he has to apologize, you will be no better off—some fools will still believe it. Let it alone—let it keep as it is; and so God will help you to fulfill by your wisdom his own promise, “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

And now, ere I close this point, let me observe once more, the fowler, when he is determined to take his birds, uses all these arts at once, perhaps, and *besets the bird on every side*. So, you will remember, beloved, it is with you. Satan will not leave a stone unturned to ruin your soul for ever.

“Amidst a thousand snares I stand,
Upheld and guarded by thy hand.”

Old Master Quarles says,

“The close pursuer’s busy hands do plant
Snares in thy substance; snares attend thy want;
Snares in thy credit; snares in thy disgrace;
Snares in thy high estate; snares in thy base;
Snares tuck thy bed; and snares surround thy board;
Snares watch thy thoughts; and snares attach thy words;
Snares in thy quiet; snares in thy commotion;
Snares in thy diet; snares in thy devotion;
Snares lurk in thy resolves, snares in thy doubt;
Snares lie within thy heart, and snares without;
Snares are above thy head, and snares beneath;
Snares in thy sickness, snares are in thy death.”

There is not a place beneath which a believer walks that is free from snares. Behind every tree there is the Indian with his barbed arrow; behind every bush there is the lion seeking to devour; under every piece of grass there lieth the adder. Everywhere they are. Let us be careful; let us gird ourselves with the might of God’s omnipotence, and then shall his Holy Spirit keep us, so that we shall tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon shall we trample under our feet, and we shall be “delivered from the snare of the fowler.”

II. Now we pass to the second point—THE DELIVERANCE. God delivers his people from the snare of the fowler. Two thoughts here: *from—out of*. First, he delivers them *from* the snare—does not let them get in it; secondly, when they do get in it, he delivers them *out of* it. The first promise is the most precious to some of us; the second is the best to others.

He shall deliver thee from the snare. How does he do that?

Very often by *trouble*. Trouble is often the means whereby God delivers us from snares. You have all heard the old story of the celebrated painter who was painting in St. Paul’s, and who, looking at his work, went gradually back, inch by inch, to get a view of it, so that he might see the excellence of its proportions, until his feet were just on the edge of the platform upon which he stood; and he would have fallen down and been dashed in pieces upon the pavement beneath, but just at that moment a workman who stood there, desirous to save his life, and not knowing how to do it, hit upon an expedient which proved to be a very wise one. Instead of shouting out to his master, “Sir, you are in danger,” which would most certainly have sent him backward, he took up a brush and dipping it in a pot of paint, dashed it at the picture. The good man rushed forward in anger to chastise him; but when it was explained, he clearly saw that he had acted wisely. Just so with God. You and I have often painted a fine picture, and we have been walking backward admiring it. God knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction and he, by a sad providence, blasts our

prospect, takes away our child from us, buries our wife, removes some darling object of our pleasures; and we rush forward and say, "Lord, why is this?"—utterly unconscious that if it had not been for trouble we might have been dashed in pieces, and our lives would have been ended in destruction. I doubt not, many of you have been saved from ruin by your sorrows, your griefs, your troubles, your woes, your losses, and your crosses. All these have been the breaking of the net that set you free from the snare of the fowler

At other times God keeps his people from the snare of the fowler *by giving them great spiritual strength, a spirit of great courage*; so that when they are tempted to do evil they say, with decision, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" O! that was a noble escape of Joseph, when his mistress laid hold of his garment; that was a noble escape of his, when his soul escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler; and I doubt not there are many here who have done deeds almost as noble as that of Joseph, who have had grace within their hearts, so that they have turned away their eyes from beholding folly, and when they have been tempted to evil they have put their foot upon it, and said, "I can not, I can not; I am a child of God; I can not and I must not;" and though the thing was pleasing to themselves yet they abjured it. You remember the case of Mr. Standfast in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Madame Bubble had greatly enticed poor Mr. Standfast with her offers. He says, "There was one in very pleasant attire, but old, who presented herself to me, and offered me three things, to wit, her body, her purse, and her bed. Now the truth is, I was both weary and sleepy: I am also as poor as an owlet, and that perhaps the witch knew. Well, I repulsed her once and again, but she put by my repulses and smiled. Then I began to be angry; but she mattered that nothing at all. Then she made offers again, and said if I would be ruled by her, she would make me great and happy; for, said she, I am the mistress of the world, and men are made happy by me. Then I asked her her name, and she told me it was Madame Bubble. This set me further from her; but she still followed me with enticements. Then I betook me, as you saw, to my knees, and with hands lifted up, and cries, I prayed to him that had said he would help. So just as you came up the gentlewoman went her way. Then I continued to give thanks for this my great deliverance; for I verily believe she intended no good, but rather sought to make stop of me in my journey." Thus God delivers his people from the snares of the fowler, by giving them the spirit of prayer as well as the spirit of courage, so that they call upon God in the day of trouble, and he delivers them.

And I have noticed one more very singular thing. Sometimes I, myself, have been saved from the snare of the fowler (I can not tell you how exactly), in this way. I have felt that if the temptation had come a week before, my mind was in that peculiar condition, that I should almost inevitably have been led away by it; but when it came, the mind, by passing through some process, had become in such a condition that the temptation was no temptation at all. We were just brought to such a state, that what might have ruined us before, we would not then look at. "No," we have said, "if you had offered me this some time ago

it might have been accepted; but now God has, by some mysterious influence of his Spirit, turned my heart in another direction, and it is not even a temptation to me at all—not worthy of a moment's thought." So God delivers his people from the snare of the fowler.

But the second thought was, that *God delivers his people, even when they get into the snare*. Alas! my hearer, you and I know something about the net; we have been inside it, we have; we have not only seen it spread, we have been in its folds. We know something about the cage, for we have, unfortunately, been in the cage ourselves, even since we have known the Lord. The fowler's hand has been upon our neck; it has only been the sovereign grace of God that has prevented him from utterly destroying us. What a blessed thing it is, that if the believer shall, in an evil hour, come into the net, yet God will bring him out of it! Poor Christian and Hopeful got into the fowler's net when they entered into the castle of Giant Despair; but the key of promise picked the lock, and they escaped. They were in the fowler's net, too, when Flatterer cast a net over them, and left them in the lane; but there came one who, after he had beaten them full sore, took the net off, and then they went on their way, better men than they were before they were in the net. I know one who is in the net now. Some bird, one of God's own ones too, has been taken in the snare, and is now groaning and crying out, because, alas! alas! he has sinned. I have a person here, a good man, a professor of religion, and a truly worthy one! but alas! he has sinned, and at this hour the tears are in his eyes, and he is saying,

“The tumult of my thoughts
Doth but increase my woe;
My spirit languishes, my heart
Is desolate and low.”

“Turn, turn thee to my soul;
Bring thy salvation near;
When will thy hand release my feet
Out of the deadly snare?”

O backslider, be cast down, but do not despair; God will restore thee yet. Wanderer though thou hast been, hear what he says! “Return, O backsliding children; I will have mercy upon you.” But you say you can not return. Then here is still a promise—“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.” Thou shalt yet be brought out from all the evil into which thou hast fallen, and though thou shalt never cease to repent thy ways even to thy dying day, yet he that hath loved thee will not cast thee away; he will receive thee; he will admit thee into his dwelling-place, and will even now restore thee to the number of his people, and give thee joy and gladness, that the bones which he has broken may rejoice. “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

There have been very remarkable instances of God delivering his people out of the snare of the fowler, as the following illustration will show:

“A young lady, who belonged to a church in the city of New York, married a young man who was not a Christian. He was a merchant, engaged in a lucrative business, and the golden stream of wealth flowed in upon him till he had amassed a large fortune. He accordingly retired from business, and went into the country. He purchased a splendid residence; fine trees waved their luxuriant foliage around it; here was a lake filled with fish, and there a garden full of rare shrubbery and flowers. Their house was fashionably and expensively furnished; and they seemed to possess all of earth that mortal could desire. Thus prospered, and plied with an interchange of civilities among her gay and fashionable neighbors, the piety of the lady declined, and her heart became wedded to the world. And it is not to be wondered at, that her three children, as they grew up, imbibed her spirit and copied her example. ‘A severe disease,’ it is said, ‘demands a severe remedy;’ and that God soon applied. One morning intelligence came that her little son had fallen into the fish-lake, and was drowned. The mother’s heart was pierced with the affliction, and she wept and murmured against the providence of God. Soon afterwards, her only daughter, a blooming girl of sixteen, was taken sick of a fever and died. It seemed then as if the mother’s heart would have broken. But this new stroke of the rod of a chastening Father seemed but to increase her displeasure against his will. The only remaining child, her eldest son, who had come home from college to attend his sister’s funeral, went out into the fields soon afterwards, for the purpose of hunting. In getting over a fence, he put his gun over first to assist himself in springing to the ground, when it accidentally discharged itself and killed him! What then were that mother’s feelings in the extravagance of her grief, she fell down, tore her hair, and raved like a maniac against the providence of God. The father, whose grief was already almost insupportable, when he looked upon the shocking spectacle, and heard her frenzied ravings, could endure his misery no longer. The iron entered into his soul and he fell speedy victim to his accumulated afflictions. From the wife and mother, her husband and all her children were now taken away. Reason returned, and she was led to reflection. She saw her dreadful backslidings, her pride, her rebellion; and she wept with the tears of a deep repentance. Peace was restored to her soul. Then could she lift up her hands to heaven, exclaiming, ‘I thank thee, O Father!—the Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Thus did her afflictions yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and her heavenly Father chasten her, ‘not for his pleasure, but for her profit, that she might become partaker of his holiness.’”

So God delivered her soul out of the snare of the fowler. She started afresh in the ways of righteousness, serving God with diligence and zeal, and growing up in his fear. By trouble and trial, by some means or another, God will surely deliver his people out of the snare of the fowler, even when they are in it.

III. And now, to conclude, I am to dwell for a moment or two upon that word “SURELY.” The assurance of every truth of Scripture is just the beauty of it. If it were not sure, it were not precious; and it is precious just because it is sure.

Now, it says, “surely he shall deliver thee.” Why? First, because he has promised to do it; and God’s promises are bonds that never yet were dishonored. If he hath said he will, he will. Secondly, because Christ Jesus hath taken an oath that he will do it. In ages long gone by Christ Jesus became the shepherd of the sheep, and the surety of them too. “If any of them perish,” said he, “at my hand, thou shalt require it;” and, therefore, because Christ is responsible, because he is the heavenly sponsor for all God’s people, they must be kept: for otherwise Christ’s bond were forfeited, and his oath were null and void. They must be kept, again, because otherwise the union that there is between all of them and Christ would not be a real one. Christ and his church are one—one body; but if any of the members of my body were cut off, I should be maimed, and if Christ could lose one of his children he would be a maimed Christ. “We are his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” If, then, the whole church were not gathered in, Christ would be an incomplete Christ, seeing he would want his fullness. They must all be saved, for God the Father has determined that they shall be; nay, the Son has sworn they shall be; and God the Holy Spirit vouches for it they shall be. None of God’s people shall be cast away, or else the Bible is not true. The whole stability of the covenant rest in their final perseverance. The whole covenant of grace rests upon this—

“He shall present our souls,
Unblemished and complete,
Before the glory of his face,
With joys divinely great.”

And therefore they must be preserved out of the snare of the fowler, because otherwise the covenant would be null and void. If one should perish the oath would be broken; if one should be cast away the covenant would be void; and therefore they must be kept secure.

“His honor is engaged to save
the meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.”

I have no time to enlarge upon that subject, which is big with glory, and might afford a topic for many discourses. I now close up by saying, Men and brethren, is this promise yours? “Surely he shall deliver thee.” Are you the men? “How can I tell?” you say. Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself wholly on the blood and righteousness of the immaculate Redeemer? I do not ask you whether you are a Wesleyan, a Churchman, a Baptist, an Independent, or a Presbyterian; my only question is, Are you born again? Have you passed from death unto life? Are you “a new creature in Christ Jesus?”

Is all your trust put in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has his life become your model, and does his Spirit dwell in your mortal body? If so, peace be unto you; this promise is yours. You may have been the worst of men; but if you have faith in Christ those sins are all forgiven, and you may take this promise to be yours for ever. But if you are self-righteous, self-sufficient, ungodly, careless, worldly, there is no such promise for you; you are in the snare, you shall be there, and you shall perish, unless you repent; for it is written, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." May God save you from perishing, by giving you an interest in the blood of Christ; and to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever.

The Fruitless Vine

A Sermon

(No. 125)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, March 22, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”—[Ezekiel 15:1-2](#).

THE JEWISH nation had arrogant ideas of themselves; when they sinned against God, they supposed that on account of the superior sanctity of their forefathers, or by reason of some special sanctity in themselves, they would be delivered, sin as they pleased. In consequence of the infinite mercy of Jehovah, which he had displayed toward them, in delivering them out of so many distresses, they gradually came to imagine that they were the favorite children of Providence, and that God could by no means ever cast them away. God, therefore, in order to humble their pride, tells them that they in themselves were nothing more than any other nation; and he asks them what there was about them to recommend them? “I have often called you a vine; I have planted you, and nurtured you in a very fruitful hill, but now you bring forth no fruit; what is there in you why I should continue you in my favor? If you imagine there is any thing about you more than about any other nation, you are mightily mistaken.” “What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”

Let us remember that these things might be said without implying that God in the least degree alters his eternal purpose toward any chosen vessel of mercy; for the Israelitish nation was not chosen to eternal salvation, as a nation, but chosen to special privileges; a type and shadow of that eternal personal election which Christ has given to his church. From his own elect church God will never withdraw his love; but from the outward and visible church he sometimes may. From his own people he never will take away his affection, but from professors, from those who merely stand in his people’s external condition, and are not his children, he may, yea and he will, withdraw every token of his favor. God humbles Israel, by reminding them that they had nothing which other nations had not; that, in fact, they were a contemptible nation, not worthy to be set side by side with the cedar of Babylon, or with the oak of Samaria; they were of no use, they were worthless, unless they brought forth fruit to him. He checks their pride and humbles them, with the parable we have here before us.

Beloved, we shall, by God's help, use this parable for ourselves, and learn two lessons from it. The first shall be *a lesson of humility for saints*; and the second, *a lesson of searching for all who are professors*.

I. First, here is A LESSON OF HUMILITY for all you who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." "What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?"

In looking upon all the various trees, we observe that the vine is distinguished among them; so that, in the old parable of Jotham, the trees waited upon the vine-tree, and said unto it, "Come thou and reign over us." But merely looking at the vine, without regard to its fruitfulness, we should not see any kingship in it over other trees. In size, form, beauty, or utility, it has not the slightest advantage. We can do nothing with the wood of the vine. Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men make a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?" It is a useless plant apart from its fruitfulness. We sometimes see it in beauty, trained up by the side of our walls, and in the East it might be seen in all its luxuriance, and great care is bestowed in its training; but leave the vine to itself, and consider it apart from its fruitfulness, it is the most insignificant and despicable of all things that bear the name of trees. Now, beloved, this is for the humbling of God's people. They are called God's vine; but what are they by nature more than others? Others are as good as they; yea, some others are even greater and better than they. They, by God's goodness, have become fruitful, have been planted in a good soil; the Lord hath trained them upon the walls of the sanctuary, and they bring forth fruit to his glory. But what are they without their God? What are they without the continual influence of the Spirit, begetting fruitfulness in them? Are they not the least among the sons of men, and the most to be despised of those that have been brought forth of women? Look upon this, believer.

"What was there in thee to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?"

Yea, look upon thyself as thou art now. Doth not thy conscience reproach thee? Do not thy thousand wanderings stand before thee, and tell thee that thou art unworthy to be called his son? Does not the weakness of thy mental power, the frailty of thy moral power, thy continual unbelief, and thy perpetual backsliding from God, tell thee that thou art less than the least of all saints? And if he hath made thee any thing, art thou not thereby taught that it is grace, free, sovereign grace, which hath made thee to differ? Should any here, supposing themselves to be the children of God, imagine that there is some reason in them why they should have been chosen, let them know, that as yet they are in the dark concerning the first principles of grace, and have not yet learned the gospel. If ever they had known the gospel, they would, on the other hand, confess that they were less than the least—the offscouring of all things—unworthy, ill-deserving, undeserving, and hell-deserving, and ascribe it all to distinguishing grace, which has made them to differ; and to discriminating love, which has

chosen them out from the rest of the world. Great Christian, thou wouldst have been a great sinner if God had not made thee to differ. O! thou who art valiant for truth, thou wouldst have been as valiant for the devil if grace had not laid hold of thee. A seat in heaven shall one day be thine; but a chain in hell would have been thine if grace had not changed thee. Thou canst now sing his love; but a licentious song might have been on thy lips, if grace had not washed thee in the blood of Jesus. Thou art now sanctified, thou art quickened, thou art justified; but what wouldst thou have been to-day if it had not been for the interposition of the divine hand? There is not a crime thou mightest not have committed; there is not a folly into which thou mightest not have run. Even murder itself thou mightest have committed if grace had not kept thee. Thou shalt be like the angels; but thou wouldst have been like the devil if thou hadst not been changed by grace. Therefore, never be proud; all thy garments thou hast from above; rags were thine only heritage. Be not proud, though thou hast a large estate, a wide domain of grace; thou hadst once not a single thing to call thine own, except thy sin and misery. Thou art now wrapped up in the golden righteousness of the Saviour, and accepted in the garments of the beloved; but thou wouldst have been buried under the black mountain of sin, and clothed with the filthy rags of unrighteousness, if he had not changed thee. And art thou proud? Dost thou exalt thyself? O! strange mystery, that thou, who hast borrowed every thing, should exalt thyself; that thou, who hast nothing of thine own, but hast still to draw upon grace, shouldst be proud; a poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of thy Saviour, and yet proud; one who hath a life which can only live by fresh streams of life from Jesus, and yet proud! Go, hang thy pride upon the gallows, as high as Haman; hang it there to rot, and stand thou beneath, and execrate it to all eternity; for sure of all things most to be cursed and despised is the pride of a Christian. He, of all men, has ten thousand times more reason than any other to be humble, and walk lowly with his God, and kindly and humbly toward his fellow-creatures. Let this, then, humble thee, Christian, that the vine-tree is nothing more than any other tree, save only for the fruitfulness which God has given it.

II. But now here comes A LESSON OF SEARCH. As the vine without its fruit is useless and worthless; so, too, the professor, without fruit, is useless and worthless; yea, he is the most useless thing in the wide world.

Now, let us dwell upon this point. *A fruitless profession.* And while I am preaching on it, let the words go round to each one, and let the minister, and let his deacons, and let his hearers all try their hearts and search their reins, and see whether they have a fruitless profession.

1. First, a fruitless professor. *How do we know him? what is his character?* Secondly, *What is the reason he is fruitless?* Thirdly, *What is the estimation God holds him in?* He is good for nothing at all. And, then, fourthly, *What will be his end?* He is to be burned with fire.

First, *Where are we to find fruitless professors?* Everywhere, dear friends, everywhere—down here, up there, everywhere; in pulpits and in pews. False professors are to be found in every church. Let us leave other denominations alone, then. They are to be found in this church; they are to be found in this present assembly. to whatever denomination you belong, there are some false and fruitless professors in it. How know you that you may not belong to those who bring forth no fruit? There are fruitless professors to be found in every position of the church, and in every part of society. You may find the false professor among the rich; he hath much wealth, and he is hailed with gladness by the church. God hath given him much of this world's good; and therefore, the church, forgetful that God hath chosen the poor, giveth him honor, and what doth she get from him? She getteth but little to help her. Her poor are still neglected, and her means not in the least recruited by his riches. Or if she gain a portion of his riches, yet she getteth none of his prayers; nor is she in the least supported by his holy living, for he that hath riches often liveth in sin, and rolleth in uncleanness; and, then, weareth his profession as a uniform, wherewith to cover his guilt. Rich men have sometimes been false professors; and thy are to be found among poor men too. Full many a poor man has entered into the church, and been cordially received. He has been poor, and they have thought it a good thing that poverty and grace should go together—that grace should cheer his hovel, and make his poverty-stricken home a glad one. But then, this poor man hath turned aside to follies, and hath degraded himself with drunkenness, hath sworn, and by unworthy conduct dishonored his God; or, if not, he hath been idle, and sat still, and been of little service to the church; and so he hath been false and fruitless in his profession.

False professors are to be found in the men that lead the vanguard of God's army; the men who preach eloquently, whose opinion is law, who speak like prophets, and whose language seems to be inspired. They have brought forth the fruit of popularity, ay, and the fruit of philanthropy too, but their heart has not been right with God, therefore, the fruit, good in itself, was not fruit unto holiness; the moral benefit of their labors does not extend to everlasting life. They have not brought forth the fruits of the Spirit, seeing that they were not living branches of the living vine. Then there have been false professors in obscurity; modest people, who have said nothing, and seldom been heard of; they have glided into their pews on the Sunday morning, taken their seats, gone out, and satisfied themselves that by their presence they had fulfilled a religious duty. They have been so silent, quiet, and retired. Lazy fellows, doing nothing. You may think that all the fruitless trees grow in the hedge outside of the garden. No they don't. There are some fruitless trees in the inside of it in the very center of it. There are some fruitless trees in the inside of it in the very center of it. There are some false professors to be found in obscurity as well as in publicity; some among the poor as well as among the rich.

And there are false professors to be found among men that doubt a great deal. They are always afraid they do not love Jesus, and always saying, “Ah, if I did but know I were his!—

“’Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought.”

Yes, and it ought to cause them anxious thought, too, if they are bringing forth no fruit and giving no “diligence to make their calling and election sure.” Fruitless professors are to be found, on the other hand, among the confident men, who say, without a blush, “I know whom I have believed; I know I am a Christian, let who will doubt. I am sure and certain my sins can not destroy me, and my righteousness can not save me. I may do what I like; I know I am one of the Lord’s.” Ah! fruitless professor again; just as fruitless as the other man, who had all doubts and no faith, and did nothing for his Master.

And then there is the fruitless professor, who, when he is asked to pray at the prayer meeting, never does so; and who neglects family prayer. We will not say any thing about private devotion; no doubt he neglects that too: he is a fruitless one. Ah! but there may be another, who stands up and prays such an eloquent prayer for a quarter of an hour, perhaps, just as fruitless a professor as the silent one; with plenty of words, but no realities; many leaves, but no fruits; great gifts of utterance, but no gifts of consistency; able to talk well, but not to walk well; to speak piously, but not to walk humbly with his God, and serve him with gladness. I do not know your individual characters; but I know enough of you to say that your position, however honorable in the church, and your character, however fair before men, is not enough to warrant any of you in concluding at once that you are not a fruitless professor. For fruitless professors are of every character and every rank, from the highest to the lowest, from the most talented to the most illiterate, from the richest to the poorest, from the most retiring to the most conspicuous. Fruitless professors there are in every part of the church.

Now, shall I tell you who is a fruitless professor? The man who neglects private prayer, and does not walk with his God in public; that man whose carriage and conversation before God are hypocritical; who cheats in trade and robs in business, yet wraps it up, and comes out with a fair face, like the hypocrite with a widow’s house sticking in his throat, and says, “Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men are!” There is a man for you, who brings forth no fruit to perfection. Another one is he who lives right morally and excellently, and depends upon his works, and hopes to be saved by his righteousness; who comes before God, and asks for pardon, with a lie in his right hand, for he has brought his own self-righteousness with him. Such a man is a fruitless professor; he has brought forth no fruit. That man, again, is a fruitless professor who talks big words about high doctrine, and likes sound truth, but he does not like sound living; his pretensions are high, but not his practice. He can bear to hear it said,

“Once in Christ, in Christ for ever.,”

But as for himself, he never was in Christ at all, for he neither loves nor serves his Master, but lives in sin that grace may abound. There is another fruitless vine for you.

But why need I stop to pick you out? May the Lord find you out to-night! There are many of you here, concerning whom the curse of Meroz might be uttered. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord; to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Many of you are content to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and bring forth no fruit to God; nor do you serve him—lazy Issachars, crouching down like a strong ass between two burdens; neither speaking for Christ; nor praying for Christ, nor giving to Christ, nor living to Christ; but having a name to live, while you are dead; wrapping yourselves up in a profession, while you are not living to Christ, nor consecrating your being to him. Judge ye what I say; if ye were put into the sieve this night, how many of you would come out clean in this matter? Are there not many high-flying professors here, who fly high, but who do nothing; who can talk fast, but live as slowly as you like; who, perhaps, delight in hearing the truth, but who never practice the truth in serving their God, nor living to his honor? Such as you, sirs, are the most useless and worthless of all creatures in the world! For, like the vine, you would be honorable if you were fruitful; but without fruit, as the vine is despicable, so are you good for nothing but to be cast out and burned.

2. And now I come to the second question—*Why is it that these men are fruitless, and must be cast away?* The reason is, because they have no roots. Many, many professors have no roots; fine professors they are, beautiful to look at, but they have no roots whatever. Don't you remember your childish freak, when you had a little garden of your own; when you plucked some flowers, and put them in the ground, and said that was your garden; and when you went the next day, and found that all the flowers were withered and dead? Such are many professors—pretty flowers, plucked off without roots; having no adherence to the soil, drawing no sap and no nourishment from it. And therefore it is they die, and bring forth no fruit. You come to us; and say, "I wish to join the church." We question you as far as we are able; you solemnly tell us that your hearts are right with God. We baptize you, receive you into our number; but then there was no root in many of you, and after a while you die; when the sun has risen with a burning heat you perish; or if you maintain a tolerably fair profession, yet there is never any fruit upon you, because you did not get the root first; you got this notion first, and then thought you would get the root afterward. I do tremble for many young people in my church—I will not exclude my own church. They get an idea into their heads that they are converted: the work was not true, not genuine, not real; it was an excitement; it was a stir in the conscience for a while, and it will not last. But the worst of it is, that though it does not last, they last as professors. When they have been received into the church, they say, "I am sure enough!" Preach about them as long as you please, you can not get at them. They are church members, they are baptized persons, they have passed

the Rubicon; what do they want more? You can do little for them. I do tremble for these. For my most hard-hearted hearers I weep before God; but for these people I need to have four eyes to weep with. For who can make an impression upon them, when they are firmly persuaded that they are right, and have had the seal of the church that they are right, though they are deceiving themselves and others, and are still “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” My young friends, I do not want to check any of you in joining a church; but I do say to you, make sure work before you make a profession. I would say to as many of you as love the Lord, come forward and unite with God’s people; but, I beseech you, do be sure; do “search you hearts and try your reins.” Many have thought themselves converted when they were not; hundreds of thousands have had an impression, a kind of conversion, not real, which for a while endured, but afterward it passed away as summer’s dream. It was but a little while ago that I had in my house a gentleman, an excellent man, and I believe a true child of God, who told me he had been brought seriously under impression, on account of sin, through hearing a sermon of late. “But,” said he, “I was baptized in my childhood. When I was but young, there was a revival in our village, in New England. Mine was the hardest heart in the village; but I was found out at last. There was scarcely a girl or boy that did not join the church, and I was at last brought under deep impression. I used to weep before God, and pray to him. I went to the minister and told him I was converted, deceived him, and was baptized.” And then he went on to tell me that he had dived into the blackest crimes, and gone far away, even from the profession of religion; that after going to college he had been struck off the church-roll on account of wickedness, and that up to this time he had been an infidel, and had not so much as thought of the things of the kingdom. Take heed, many of you, that you do not get a sham religion. Many jump out of it again, when they find the world pays them better. And many there are who will just come and say they are the Lord’s, and they think they are, but there is no root in them, and therefore by-and-by their impressions pass away. O we have many fruitless professors in our midst, because they do not look well to their beginnings; they did not take heed at their starting point, they did not watch well the first dawn; they thought the little farthing rushlight of their own hopes was the dawning of the Sun of righteousness; they thought the bleeding of their own conscience was a killing by the hand of God, whereas it was a deeper, and better and surer, and more entire work that they needed, than that which they received. Let us take heed, my brethren, that we do not put too much trust in our experiences, and take too much for granted while it is not yet proved in our beginnings; let us often go back and begin again; let us often go to Christ with the old cry,

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;”

For remember that these bad beginnings have had a great effect in making a man fruitless.

3. And again, thirdly—*What is God's estimation of fruitless professors?* I shall not ask you their own; for there are many men who are professors of religion, with whom you might make your fortune very speedily if you could buy them at your price and sell them at their own. There are many, too, that have a very good opinion of themselves, which they have gained from the church. The minister thinks well of them; the church thinks well of them; they are respectable people; it is so nice to have them come, it helps the cause so, to see such respectable people sitting in the pews! Really, I do think he would do for a deacon! Everybody thinks well of him. Now we have nothing to do with this kind of opinion to-night; our business is with God's opinion of such a man. And God's opinion of a man who makes a profession without being sincere, is this—that he is the most useless thing in the world. And now let me try to prove it. Is there any one that will prove that this man is of any use at all? I will ask the church—Here is a man that brings forth no fruit, and has only a profession. Members of the church, what is the use of this man? Will he comfort any of you in your distress? Will he hold up the pastor's hands in prayer, when he is weary? Will he lead the troops to battle? Will he be of any service to you? I see you unanimously lift up your hands, and say, "The man is of no use to us whatever, if he brings forth no fruit; if his life be not consistent with his profession; strike his name off the church-roll; let him go; he is of no use." Where has he gone to? He has gone to the world. Bring the worldling up. What do you think of this man? He makes a profession of religion. Is he of any use to you? "No," they say, "we do not want such a fellow as that. The man is Jack-of-both-sides; he is sometimes a professor of religion, and sometimes a sinner in the world. We will have nothing to do with him; turn him out of our company." Where shall we sell him then? How shall we dispose of him? He seems to be of no use either to the church or the world. Is he of any use to his family? Ask his eldest son. "John, is your father any good to you?" "No, sir; none at all. He used to pray the Lord to save us with seeming earnestness, and rise from his knees to give vent to his temper. Many a violent blow has he given me without any reasonable provocation. He was always a passionate man. He used to go to chapel on Sunday and take us with him and then we know what he used to do on Monday; he would get drunk, or swear. A deal of use he was ever to me! He made me an infidel, sir!" And his wife, "Well, what do you think of this good husband of yours? He has long made a profession of religion." "Ah! sir, it is not for me to say a word about my husband; but he has made me a miserable woman. I think I should have joined your church long ago, if it had not been for his miserable inconsistencies. But really he has grieved my heart; he has always been a stumbling-block to me; and what to do with him I do not know." Well, Jane, we will have you out of the kitchen. "What think you of your master; he makes a profession of religion, yet does not live a right life. What do you think of him?" "Well, I did think that Christians were a good sort of people, and that I should like to live with them; but if this be Christianity, sir, I will take five pounds a year less to live with a worldly man; that's all I can say." Well, what is the use

of him? I suppose he does something in business. He is a grand professor. He keeps a shop; everybody thinks him a most respectable man. Has he not given a hundred pounds just now to the building of a new church? Is he not always known to subscribe liberally to ragged schools? We will ask his men. "What do you think of your master?" "What do we think of him? Why, we would think a great deal more of him if he would give us a half-crown a week more wages; for he is the worst paymaster in the parish." "That is nothing, perhaps. But what do you think of him?" "Why, that he is an unutterable cant! Some of us did go to a place of worship, but we are honest, and we would rather stay away than go with such a miserable hypocrite." I am describing real cases and not fictions. I need not to go further than between this and London Bridge to knock at the door and wake them up, some of them. What is the good of such professors? If they would speak fairly out, and say, "I am no Christian," there would be some sense in it. For if Baal be God, let Baal be served; and if the world be worth serving, let a man serve it out and out; and let him get the credit of candor—not cheating the devil. But if God be God, and a man live in sin, and talk about grace, then of what use is he? God himself will disown him. Ask him if this man has been of any use, and he replies, "No, of no use whatever." The vine is of no use unless it bring forth fruit; and this man, making a profession, is worse than worthless, because he does not live up to it. My dear friends, I would not say an extravagant thing, but I will say this very coolly—if any of you, who make a profession of religion, are deceiving others, by not living up to it, I do request you—and I say it advisedly—I do request you to give up your profession, unless God give you grace to live up to it. Do not, I beseech you, halt between two opinions; if God be God, serve him, and do it thoroughly; do not tell lies about it. If Baal be God; if he be a nice master; if you would like to serve him, and win his wages, serve him; but do not mix the two together; be one thing, or else the other. Renounce your profession, and serve the devil thoroughly, or else keep your profession, and serve God with your heart—one thing, or else the other. I solemnly exhort you to choose which you will have, but never think that you can keep both; for "no man can serve two masters." "Ye can not serve God and mammon."

4. And now let me close up by mentioning *what is to become of this fruitless tree?* We are told it is to be devoured in the fire. When an old vine is pulled off the wall, after having brought forth no fruit, what becomes of it? You know there is a lot of weeds raked up in the corner of the garden, and the gardener, without taking any notice of it, just throws the vine on the heap of weeds, and it is burned up. If it were any other kind of a tree he would at least reserve it for chopping up to make a fire within the master's house; but this is much an ignominious thing, he throws it away in the corner and burns it up with the weeds. If it were a stout old oak, it might have the funeral of the yule log, with honor in its burning, and brightness in its flame; but the fruitless vine is treated with contempt, and left to smoulder with the weeds, the refuse, and rubbish. It is a miserable thing. Just so with professors; all

men that love not God must perish. But those who profess to love him, and do not, shall perish with singular ignominy. "They shall not come into the sepulchres of the kings." Something like the ancient king, of whom it was said, "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem." The damnation of a professor will be the most horrible and ignominious sight that ever hell itself has seen! When Satan fell from heaven, with his black Satanic malice against God, there was a kind of grandeur in his devilry; there was an awful, terrific sublimity in his damnation; and when a great blasphemer and a hard swearer shall be sent at last to perdition, there shall be something of sublimity in it, because he has been consistent with his profession. But when a professor of religion finds himself in hell, it shall be the most miserable, contemptible, and yet terrible mode of damnation wherewith men were ever damned. I think I see honest blasphemers lifting themselves from their chains of fire, and hissing between their teeth at the minister who comes there, after having been a deceiver—"Aha! aha! aha! art thou here with us? Thou didst warn us of our drunkenness, and tell us of our curse; ah! art thou come into the drunkard's hell thyself?" "Pshaw!" says another, "that is your strict Pharisee. Ah! I remember how he told me one night that I should perish, unless I made a profession of religion. Take that, sir!" and he spits upon him. "Thou art a loathsome thing. I perished; but I served my master well. Thou—thou didst pretend to serve God, and yet thou art a sneaking hypocrite!" Says another, yelling from the corner of the pit, "Let us have a Methodist hymn, sir; quote a promise from the Bible; tell us about election. Let us have a little of your fine preaching now." And round hell there goes the hiss, and the "aha! aha! aha!" and the yell of spitefulness and scorn upon the man who professed to be a Christian, but became a castaway, because his heart was not right in the matter. I confess, I should dread above all things the unutterable hell of hells of hypocritical apostates, of men that stand in the ranks, profess to love God, prate godliness, that sit in the pews and uphold Christianity, that take the sacrament, and speak about communion, that stand up to pray, and talk about being heard for their faith, who are all the while committing abominations, and under cover of their professions are cheating the poor, robbing the fatherless, and doing all kinds of iniquity. I confess, I as much dread the excess of their damnation, above the damnation of others, as I dread to be damned at all. It is as if in hell another hell had been made, to damn those that sin above others, to damn them after being damned—for hypocrites, for men who have been with us, and not of us; who professed to be Christ's, and yet have been mean deceivers after all. O! sirs, if ye would not make your chains more heavy, if ye would not stir the fire to a more furious heat, if ye would not make your yells more hideous, quit your professions this night, if ye are not worthy of them. Go out of this place, and send in your resignation to the church; or else, sirs, be honest, and bend your knee before God, and ask him to search you, and try you, and make you sincere and upright before him. Be one thing, or else the other; do not cloak yourself in the robes of sanctity to hide the corruptions that all the while fester beneath.

Stand out, bold, brave sinners; and do not be mean, sneaking sinners, that wear the masks of saints. "What is the vine more than any other tree?" Without fruit it is worse than any other. It must perish more dolefully, more horribly than any other, if there be on it no fruit brought to perfection. Does not this shake us? Ah! it will shake you, very likely, that do not want the shaking; but the men that want arousing will keep just as they were. It will go into the hearts of some of you, like the cry, "Howl, Moab, howl, Moab!" but alas! Moab will not howl. You will weep for Kirhareth but Kirhareth will not weep for herself. You will weep for your hypocritical friends; but they will rub their eyes, and say, "A strong sermon; but it has nothing to do with me." And they will go out with cool presumption; sin with one hand, and take the sacramental cup with the other; sing the lascivious song one night, and then sing,

"Jesus, lover of my soul,"

the day after. Meet Christ here, and take the devil yonder, and bid him God speed in all his freaks of devilry. Ah! sirs, sirs, sirs, take heed, take heed, I beseech you, of this matter. Let us each search our hearts, lest we should have been deceived. And may God bring us to a right understanding in this matter, that we may be clear before him. "Search me, O God, and know my ways; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked thing in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

And, now, I must not send you away until I have had a word with my friend in the aisle there. He says, "I like that, I like that; I am no professor, I am not; I am all right. No one can call me a hypocrite." Well, my dear friend, I am very glad you are not, because you say you are no Christian. But let me tell you, you must not expect to be a wonderful deal the better off for that. Suppose two men are brought up before the Lord Mayor, and one says, "Your worship, I am an honest man and not guilty;" and he blushes that an imputation should be cast on his character. Well, he is proved to be guilty, and gets committed to prison for three months. Up comes the other one, and says, "Your worship, I am a guilty man; I always was a rogue, and I always shall be; I don't make a profession at all." "I think I must give you six months," says his worship, "for really I think you must be the more determined rascal of the two." So if any of you say, "I don't make a profession, I shall be all right," let me tell you, that to make a lying profession is a very fearful thing; but for you to think of getting off because you make no profession at all, is equally bad. Take heed you do not deceive yourselves; it must be the new heart and the right spirit with God, or else, profession or no profession, we must perish. O! that God would give us grace to go to our houses, and cry to him for mercy, and would help us to repent of our sins, and bring us to put our trust simply and wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ! So should we be saved now, and saved for ever.

Justification by Grace

A Sermon

(No. 126)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 5, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—[Rom. 3:24](#).

THE hill of comfort is the hill of calvary; the house of consolation is builded with the wood of the cross; the temple of heavenly cordials is founded upon the riven rock, riven by the spear which pierced its side. No scene in sacred history ever gladdens the soul like the scene on Calvary.

“Is it not strange, the darkest hour
That ever dawn’d on sinful earth
Should touch the heart with softer power
For comfort, than an angel’s mirth?
That to the cross the mourner’s eye should turn,
Sooner than where the stars of Bethlehem burn?”

Nowhere does the soul ever find such consolation as on that very spot where misery reigned, where woe triumphed, where agony reached its climax. There grace hath dug a fountain, which ever gusheth with waters pure as crystal, each drop capable of alleviating the woes and the agonies of mankind. Ye have had your seasons of woe, my brethren and my sisters in Christ Jesus; and ye will confess it was not at Olivet that ye ever found comfort, not on the hill of Sinai, nor on Tabor; but Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha have been a means of comfort to you. The bitter herbs of Gethsemane have often taken away the bitters of your life; the scourge of Gabbatha hath often scourged away your cares, and the groans of Calvary have put all other groans to flight.

We have, this morning, then, a subject which I trust may be the means of comforting God’s saints, seeing it takes its rise at the cross, and thence runs on in a rich stream of perennial blessing to all believers. You note, we have in our text, first of all, *the redemption of Christ Jesus*; secondly, *the justification of sinners flowing from it*; and then thirdly, *the manner of the giving of this justification*, “freely by his grace.”

I. First, then, we have THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN OR BY CHRIST JESUS.

The figure of redemption is very simple, and has been very frequently used in Scripture. When a prisoner has been taken captive, and has been made a slave by some barbarous power, it has been usual, before he could be set free, that a ransom price should be paid down. Now, we being, by the fall of Adam, prone to guiltiness, and, indeed, virtually guilty,

we were by the irreproachable judgment of God given up to the vengeance of the law; we were given into the hands of justice; justice claimed us to be his bond slaves for ever, unless we could pay a ransom, whereby our souls could be redeemed. We were, indeed, poor as owlets, we had not wherewith to bless ourselves. We were, as our hymn hath worded it, “bankrupt debtors;” an execution was put into our house; all we had was sold; we were left naked, and poor, and miserable, and we could by no means find a ransom; it was just then that Christ stepped in, stood sponsor for us, and, in the room and stead of all believers, did pay the ransom price, that we might in that hour be delivered from the curse of the law and the vengeance of God, and go our way, clean, free, justified by his blood.

Let me just endeavour to show you some qualities of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. You will remember *the multitude* he has redeemed; not me alone, nor you alone, but “a multitude that no man can number,” which shall as far exceed the stars of heaven for number, as they exceed all mortal reckoning. Christ hath bought for himself, some out of every kingdom, and nation, and tongue, under heaven; he hath redeemed from among men some of every rank, from the highest to the lowest; some of every colour—black and white; some of every standing in society, the best and the worst. For some of all sorts hath Jesus Christ given himself a ransom that they might be redeemed unto himself.

Now, concerning this ransom, we have to observe, that it was *all paid*, and all paid *at once*. When Christ redeemed his people, he did it thoroughly; he did not leave a single debt unpaid, nor yet one farthing for them to settle afterwards. God demanded of Christ the payment for the sins of all his people; Christ stood forward, and to the utmost farthing paid what'er his people owed. The sacrifice of Calvary was not a part payment; it was not a partial exoneration, it was a complete and perfect payment, and it obtained a complete and perfect remittal of all the debts of all believers that have lived, do live, or shall live, to the very end of time. On that day when Christ hung on the cross, he did not leave a single farthing for us to pay as a satisfaction to God; he did not leave, from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, that he had not satisfied. The whole of the demands of the law were paid down there and then by Jehovah Jesus, the great high priest of all his people. And blessed be his name, he paid it all at once too. So priceless was the ransom, so princely and munificent was the price demanded for our souls, one might have thought it would have been marvellous if Christ had paid it by instalments; some of it now, and some of it then. King's ransoms have sometimes been paid part at once, and part in dues afterwards, to run through years. But not so our Saviour: once for all he gave himself a sacrifice; at once he counted down the price, and said, “It is finished,” leaving nothing for him to do, nor for us to accomplish. He did not drivel out a part-payment, and then declare that he would come again to die, or that he would again suffer, or that he would again obey; but down upon the nail, to the utmost farthing, the ransom of all people was paid, and a full receipt given to them, and Christ nailed that receipt to his cross, and said, “It is done, it is done; I have taken away the hand-

writing of ordinances, I have nailed it to the cross; who is he that shall condemn my people, or lay anything to their charge? for I have blotted out like a cloud their transgressions, and like a thick cloud their sins!”

And when Christ paid all this ransom, will you just notice, that *he did it all himself!* He was very particular about that. Simon, the Cyrenian, might bear the cross; but Simon, the Cyrenian, might not be nailed to it. That sacred circle of Calvary was kept for Christ alone. Two thieves were with him there; not righteous men, lest any should have said that the death of those two righteous men helped the Saviour. Two thieves hung there with him, that men might see that there was majesty in his misery, and that he could pardon men and show his sovereignty, even when he was dying. There were no righteous men to suffer; no disciples shared his death; Peter was not dragged there to be beheaded, John was not nailed to a cross side by side with him; he was left there alone. He says, “I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the people there was none with me.” The whole of the tremendous debt was put upon his shoulders; the whole weight of the sins of all his people was placed upon him. Once he seemed to stagger under it: “Father, if it be possible.” But again he stood upright: “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” The whole of the punishment of his people was distilled into one cup; no mortal lip might give it so much as a solitary sip. When he put it to his own lips, it was so bitter, he well nigh spurned it—“Let this cup pass from me.” But his love for his people was so strong, that he took the cup in both his hands, and

“At one tremendous draught of love
He drank damnation dry,”

for all his people. He drank it all, he endured all, he suffered all; so that now for ever there are no flames of hell for them, no racks of torment; they have no eternal woes; Christ hath suffered all they ought to have suffered, and they must, they shall go free. The work was completely done by himself, without a helper.

And note, again, *it was accepted*. In truth, it was a goodly ransom. What could equal it? A soul “exceeding sorrowful even unto death;” a body torn with torture; a death of the most inhuman kind; and an agony of such a character, that tongue cannot speak of it, nor can even man’s mind imagine its horror. It was a goodly price. But say, was it accepted? There have been prices paid sometimes, or rather offered, which never were accepted by the party to whom they were offered, and therefore the slave did not go free. But this was accepted. The evidence I will shew you. When Christ declared that he would pay the debt for all his people, God sent the officer to arrest him for it; he arrested him in the garden of Gethsemane, and seizing upon him, he dragged him to the bar of Pilate, to the bar of Herod, and to the judgment seat of Caiaphas; the payment was all made, and Christ was put into the grave. He was there, locked up in durance vile, until the acceptance should have been ratified in heaven. He slept there a portion of three days in his tomb. It was declared that the ratification was to be this: the surety was to go his way as soon as ever his suretyship engagements had

been fulfilled. Now let your minds picture the buried Jesus. He is in the sepulchre. 'Tis true he has paid all the debt, but the receipt is not yet given; he slumbers in that narrow tomb. Fastened in with a seal upon a giant stone, he sleeps still in his grave; not yet has the acceptance been given from God; the angels have not yet come from heaven to say, "The deed is done, God has accepted thy sacrifice." Now is the crisis of this world; it hangs trembling in the balance. Will God accept the ransom, or will he not? We shall see. An angel comes from heaven with exceeding brightness; he rolls away the stone; and forth comes the captive, with no manacles upon his hands, with the grave clothes left behind him; free, never more to suffer, never more to die. Now,

"If Jesus had not paid the debt,
He ne'er had been at freedom set."

If God had not accepted his sacrifice, he would have been in his tomb at this moment; he never would have risen from his grave. But his resurrection was a pledge of God's accepting him. He said, "I have had a claim upon thee to this hour; that claim is paid now; go thy way." And death gave up his royal captive, the stone was rolled into the garden, and the conqueror came forth, leading captivity captive.

And, moreover, God gave a second proof of acceptance; *for he took his only begotten Son to heaven*, and set him at his right hand, far above all principalities and powers; and therein he meant to say to him, "Sit upon the throne, for thou hast done the mighty deed; all thy works and all thy miseries are accepted as the ransom of men." O my beloved, think what a grand sight it must have been when Christ ascended into glory; what a noble certificate it must have been of his Father's acceptance of him! Do you not think you see the scene on earth? It is very simple. A few disciples are standing upon a hill, and Christ mounts into the air in slow and solemn movement, as if an angel sped his way by gentle degrees, like mist or exhalation from the lake into the skies. Can you imagine what is going on up yonder? Can you for a moment conceive how, when the mighty conqueror entered the gates of heaven, the angels met him,

"They brought his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne;
Clapp'd their triumphant wings, and cried,
'The glorious work is done'"

Can you think how loud were the plaudits when he entered the gates of heaven? Can you conceive how they pressed on one another, to behold how he came conquering and red from the fight? Do you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the saints redeemed, come to behold the Saviour and the Lord? They had desired to see him, and now their eyes behold him in flesh and blood, the conqueror over death and hell! Do you think you see him, with hell at his chariot-wheels, with death dragged as a captive through the royal streets of heaven? Oh, what a spectacle was there that day! No Roman warrior ever had such a triumph; none ever

saw such a majestic sight. The pomp of a whole universe, the royalty of entire creation, cherubim and seraphim and all powers create, did swell the show; and God himself, the Everlasting One, crowned all, when he pressed his Son to his bosom, and said, "Well done, well done; thou hast finished the work which I gave thee to do. Rest here for ever, mine accepted one." Ah, but he never would have had that triumph, if he had not paid all the debt. Unless his Father had accepted the ransom-price, the ransomer had never been so honoured; but because it was accepted, therefore did he so triumph. So far, then, concerning the ransom.

II. And now, by the help of God's Spirit, let me address myself to THE EFFECT OF THE RANSOM; being justified—"justified freely by his grace through the redemption."

Now, *what is the meaning of justification?* Divines will puzzle you, if you ask them. I must try the best I can to make justification plain and simple, even to the comprehension of a child. There is not such a thing as justification to be had on earth for mortal men, except in one way. Justification, you know, is a forensic term; it is employed always in a legal sense. A prisoner is brought to the bar of justice to be tried. There is only one way whereby that prisoner can be justified; that is, he must be found not guilty; and if he is found not guilty, then he is justified—that is, he is proved to be a just man. If you find that man guilty, you cannot justify him. The Queen may pardon him, but she cannot justify him. The deed is not a justifiable one, if he were guilty concerning it; and he cannot be justified on account of it. He may be pardoned; but not royalty itself can ever wash that man's character. He is as much a real criminal when he is pardoned as before. There is no means among men of justifying a man of an accusation which is laid against him, except by his being proved not guilty. Now, the wonder of wonders is, that we are proved guilty, and yet we are justified: the verdict has been brought in against us, guilty; and yet, notwithstanding, we are justified. Can any earthly tribunal do that? No; it remained for the ransom of Christ to effect that which is an impossibility to any tribunal upon earth. We are all guilty. Read the 23rd verse, immediately preceding the text—"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." There the verdict of guilty is brought in, and yet we are immediately afterwards said to be justified freely by his grace.

Now, allow me to explain *the way whereby God justifies a sinner*. I am about to suppose an impossible case. A prisoner has been tried, and condemned to death. He is a guilty man; he cannot be justified, because he is guilty. But now, suppose for a moment that such a thing as this could happen—that some second party could be introduced, who could take all that man's guilt upon himself, who could change places with that man, and by some mysterious process, which of course is impossible with men, become that man; or take that man's character upon himself; he, the righteous man, putting the rebel in his place, and making the rebel a righteous man. We cannot do that in our courts. If I were to go before a judge, and he should agree that I should be committed for a year's imprisonment, instead of some wretch who was condemned yesterday to a year's imprisonment, I could not take his guilt.

I might take his punishment, but not his guilt. Now, what flesh and blood cannot do, that Jesus Christ by his redemption did. Here I stand, the sinner. I mention myself as the representative of you all. I am condemned to die. God says, "I will condemn that man; I must, I will—I will punish him." Christ comes in, puts me aside, and stands himself in my stead. When the plea is demanded, Christ says, "Guilty;" takes my guilt to be his own guilt. When the punishment is to be executed, forth comes Christ. "Punish me," he says; "I have put my righteousness on that man, and I have taken that man's sins on me. Father, punish me, and consider that man to have been me. Let him reign in heaven; let me suffer misery. Let me endure his curse, and let him receive my blessing." This marvellous doctrine of the changing of places of Christ with poor sinners, is a doctrine of revelation, for it never could have been conceived by nature. Let me, lest I should have made a mistake, explain myself again. The way whereby God saves a sinner is not, as some say, by passing over the penalty. No; the penalty has been all paid. It is the putting of another person in the rebel's place. The rebel must die; God says he must. Christ says, "I will be substitute for the rebel. The rebel shall take my place; I will take his." God consents to it. No earthly monarch could have power to consent to such a change. But the God of heaven had a right to do as he pleased. In his infinite mercy he consented to the arrangement. "Son of my love," said he, "you must stand in the sinner's place; you must suffer what he ought to have suffered; you must be accounted guilty, just as he was accounted guilty; and then I will look upon the sinner in another light. I will look at him as if he were Christ; I will accept him as if he were my only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth. I will give him a crown in heaven, and I will take him to my heart for ever and ever." This is the way we are saved, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

And now, let me further go on to *explain some of the characteristics* of this justification. As soon as a repenting sinner is justified, remember, he is justified for all his sins. Here stands a man all guilty. The moment he believes in Christ, his pardon at once he receives, and his sins are no longer his; they are cast into the depths of the sea. They were laid upon the shoulders of Christ, and they are gone. The man stands a guiltless man in the sight of God, accepted in the beloved. "What!" say you, "do you mean that literally?" Yes, I do, That is the doctrine of justification by faith. Man ceases to be regarded by divine justice as a guilty being; the moment he believes on Christ his guilt is all taken away. But I am going a step further. The moment the man believes in Christ, he ceases to be guilty in God's esteem; but what is more, he becomes righteous, he becomes meritorious; for, in the moment when Christ takes his sins he takes Christ's righteousness; so that, when God looks upon the sinner who but an hour ago was dead in sins, he looks upon him with as much love and affection as he ever looked upon his Son. He himself has said it—"As the Father loved me, so have I loved you." He loves us as much as his Father loved him. Can you believe such a doctrine as that? Does it not pass all thought? Well, it is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit; the doctrine

whereby we must hope to be saved. Can I to any unenlightened person illustrate this thought better? I will give him the parable we have given to us in the prophets—the parable of Joshua the high-priest. Joshua comes in, clothed in filthy garments; those filthy garments representing his sins. Take away the filthy garments; that is pardon. Put a mitre on his head; clothe him in royal raiment; make him rich and fair; that is justification. But where do *these* garments come from? and where do those rags go to? Why, the rags that Joshua had on go to Christ, and the garments put on Joshua are the garments that Christ wore. The sinner and Christ do just what Jonathan and David did. Jonathan put his robes on David, David gave Jonathan his garments; so Christ takes our sins, we take Christ's righteousness; and it is by a glorious substitution and interchange of places that sinners go free and are justified by his grace.

“But,” says one, “no one is justified like that, till he dies.” Believe me, he is.

“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives;
Salvation in full, through his blood.”

If that young man over there has really believed in Christ this morning, realizing by a spiritual experience what I have attempted to describe, he is as much justified in God's sight now as he will be when he stands before the throne. Not the glorified spirits above are more acceptable to God than the poor man below, who is once justified by grace. It is a perfect washing, it is perfect pardon, perfect imputation; we are fully, freely, and wholly accepted, through Christ our Lord. Just one more word here, and then I will leave this matter of justification. Those who are once justified are justified irreversibly. As soon as a sinner takes Christ's place, and Christ takes the sinner's place, there is no fear of a second change. If Christ has once paid the debt, the debt is paid, and it will never be asked for again; if you are pardoned, you are pardoned once for ever. God does not give man a free pardon under his own sign-manual, and then afterwards retract it and punish man: that be far from God so to do. He says, “I have punished Christ; you may go free.” And after that, we may “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” that “being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And now I hear one cry, “That is an extraordinary doctrine.” Well, so some may think; but let me say to you, it is a doctrine professed by all protestant churches, though they may not preach it. It is the doctrine of the Church of England, it is the doctrine of Luther, it is the doctrine of the Presbyterian church; it is professedly the doctrine of all Christian churches; and if it seems strange in your ears, it is because your ears are estranged, and not because the doctrine is a strange one. It is the doctrine of holy writ, that none can condemn whom God justifies, and that none can accuse those for whom Christ hath died; for they are totally free from sin. So that, as one of the prophets has it, God sees no sin in Jacob nor iniquity in Israel. In the moment they believe, their sins being imputed to Christ,

they cease to be theirs, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to them and accounted theirs, so that they are accepted.

III. And now I close up with the third point, upon which I shall be brief, and I hope very earnest: THE MANNER OF GIVING THIS JUSTIFICATION. John Bunyan would have it, that there are some whose mouths are set a watering for this great gift of justification. Are there not some here who are saying, "Oh! if I could be justified! But, Sir, can I be justified? I have been a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I have been everything that is vile. Can I be justified? Will Christ take my black sins, and am I to take his white robes? Yes, poor soul, if thou desirest it; if God has made *thee willing*, if thou dost confess thy sins, Christ is willing to take thy rags, and give thee his righteousness, to be thine for ever. "Well, but how is it to be obtained?" says one "must I be a holy man for many years, and then get it?" Listen! "Freely by his grace;" "freely," because there is no price to be paid for it; "By his grace," because it is not of our deservings. "But, O Sir, I have been praying, and I do not think God will forgive me, unless I do something to deserve it." I tell you, Sir, if you bring in any of your deservings, you shall never have it. God gives away his justification freely; if you bring anything to pay for it, he will throw it in your face, and will not give his justification to you. He gives it away freely. Old Rowland Hill once went preaching at a fair; he noticed the chapmen selling their wares by auction; so Rowland said, "I am going to hold an auction too, to sell wine and milk, without money and without price. My friends over there," said he "find a great difficulty to get you up to their price; my difficulty is to bring you down to mine." So it is with men. If I could preach justification to be bought by you at a sovereign a piece, who would go out of the place without being justified? If I could preach justification to you by walking a hundred miles, would we not be pilgrims tomorrow morning, every one of us? If I were to preach justification which would consist in whippings and torture, there are very few here who would not whip themselves, and that severely too. But when it is freely, freely, freely, men turn away. "What! am I to have it for nothing at all, without doing anything?" Yes, Sir, you are to have it for nothing, or else not at all; it is "freely." "But may I not go to Christ, lay some claim to his mercy, and say, Lord, justify me because I am not so bad as others?" It will not do, Sir, because it is "by his grace." "But may I not indulge a hope, because I go to church twice a day?" No, Sir; it is "by his grace." "But may I not offer this plea, I mean to be better?" No, sir; it is "by his grace." You insult God by bringing your counterfeit coin to pay for his treasures. Oh! what poor ideas men have of the value of Christ's gospel, if they think they can buy it! God will not have your rusty farthings to buy heaven with. A rich man once, when he was dying, had a notion that he could buy a place in heaven by building a row of almshouses. A good man stood by his bed-side, and said, "How much more are you going to leave?" "Twenty thousand pounds." Said he "That would not buy enough for your foot to stand on in heaven; for the streets are made of gold there, and therefore of what value can your gold be, it would be accounted nothing of, when the very streets are paved with

it?” Nay, friends, we cannot buy heaven with gold nor good works, nor prayers, nor anything in the world. But how is it to be got? Why it is to be got for asking only. As many of us as know ourselves to be sinners may have Christ for asking for him. Do you know that you want Christ? You may have Christ! “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” But if you cleave to your own notions, and say, “No, Sir, I mean to do a great many good things, and then I will believe in Christ.”—Sir, you will be damned if you hold by such delusions. I earnestly warn you. You cannot be saved so. “Well, but are we not to do good works?” Certainly you are; but you are not to trust in them. You must trust in Christ wholly, and then do good works afterwards. “But,” says one, “I think if I were to do a few good works, it would be a little recommendation when I came.” It would not, sir; they would be no recommendation at all. Let a beggar come to your house in white kid gloves, and say he is very badly off, and wants some charity; would the white kid gloves recommend him to your charity? Would a good new hat that he has been buying this morning recommend him to your charity? “No,” you would say, “you are a miserable impostor; you do not want anything, and you shall not have anything either! Out with you!”

The best livery for a beggar is rags, and the best livery for a sinner to go to Christ in, is for him to go just as he is, with nothing but sin about him. “But no;” say you, “I must be a little better, and then I think Christ will save me!” You cannot get any better, try as long as you please. And besides—to use a paradox—if you were to get better, you would be all the worse; for the worse you are, the better to come to Christ. If you are all unholy come to Christ; if you feel your sin, and renounce it, come to Christ; though you have been the most debased and abandoned soul, come to Christ; if you feel yourself to have nothing about you that can recommend you, come to Christ.

“Venture on him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.”

I do not say this to urge any man to continue in sin. God forbid! If you continue in sin, you must not come to Christ; you cannot; your sins will hamper you. You cannot be chained to your galley- oar—the oar of your sins—yet come to Christ, and be a free man. No, sir, it is repentance; it is the immediate leaving off the sin. But mark thee, neither by repentance, nor by leaving off thy sin, can save thee. It is Christ, Christ, Christ—Christ only.

But I know you will go away, many of you, and try to build up your own Babel-tower, to get to heaven. Some of you will go one way to work, and some another. You will go the ceremony way: you will lay the foundation of the structure with infant baptism, build confirmation on it, and the Lord’s supper. “I shall go to heaven,” you say; “Do not I keep Good Friday and Christmas-day? I am a better man than those dissenters. I am a most extraordinary man. Do I not say more prayers than any one?” You will be a long while going up that treadmill, before you get an inch higher. That is not the way to get to the stars. One says, “I will go and study the Bible, and believe right doctrine; and I have no doubt that by believing

right doctrine I shall be saved.” Indeed you will not! You can be no more saved by believing right doctrine than you can by doing right actions. “There,” says another, “I like that; I shall go and believe in Christ, and live as I like.” Indeed you will not! For if you believe in Christ he will not let you live as your flesh liketh; by his Spirit he will constrain you to mortify its affections and lusts. If he gives you the grace to make you believe, he will give you the grace to live a holy life afterwards. If he gives you faith, he gives you good works afterwards. You cannot believe in Christ, unless you renounce every fault, and resolve to serve him with full purpose of heart. Methinks at last I hear a sinner say, “Is that the only door? And may I venture through it? Then I will. But I do not quite understand you; I am something like poor Tiff, in that remarkable book ‘Dred.’ They talk a great deal about a door, but I cannot see the door; they talk a great deal about the way, but I cannot see the way. For if poor Tiff could see the way, he would take these children away by it. They talk about fighting, but I do not see any one to fight, or else I would fight.” Let me explain it then. I find in the Bible, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” What have you to do, but to believe this and trust in him? You will never be disappointed with such a faith as that. Let me give you over again an illustration I have given hundreds of times, but I cannot find another so good, so I must give it again. Faith is something like this. There is a story told of a captain of a man-of-war, whose son—a young lad—was very fond of running up the rigging of the ship; and one time, running after a monkey, he ran up the mast, till at last he got on to the maintruck. Now, the maintruck, you are aware, is like a large round table put on to the mast, so that when the boy was on the maintruck there was plenty of room for him; but the difficulty was—to use the best explanation I can—that he could not reach the mast that was under the table; he was not tall enough to get down from this maintruck, reach the mast, and so descend. There he was on the maintruck; he managed to get up there, somehow or other, but down he never could get. His father saw that, and he looked up in horror; what was he to do? In a few moments his son would fall down, and be dashed to pieces! He was clinging to the main-truck with all his might, but in a little time he would fall down on the deck, and there he would be a mangled corpse. The captain called for a speaking trumpet; he put it to his mouth, and shouted, “Boy, the next time the ship lurches, throw yourself into the sea.” It was, in truth, his only way of escape; he might be picked up out of the sea, but he could not be rescued if he fell on the deck. The poor boy looked down on the sea; it was a long way; he could not bear the idea of throwing himself into the roaring current beneath him; he thought it looked angry and dangerous. How could he cast himself down into it? So he clung to the main-truck with all his might, though there was no doubt that he must soon let go and perish. The father called for a gun, and pointing it up at him, said, “Boy, the next time the ship lurches, throw yourself into the sea, or I’ll shoot you!” He knew his father would keep his word; the ship lunched on one side, over went the boy splash into the sea, and out went

brawny arms after him; the sailors rescued him, and brought him on deck. Now, we, like the boy, are in a position of extra-ordinary danger, by nature, which neither you nor I can possibly escape of ourselves. Unfortunately, we have got some good works of our own, like that maintruck, and we cling to them so fondly, that we never will give them up. Christ knows that unless we do give them up, we shall be dashed to pieces at the last, for that rotten trust must ruin us. He, therefore, says, "Sinner, let go thine own trust, and drop into the sea of my love." We look down, and say, "Can I be saved by trusting in God? He looks as if he were angry with me, and I could not trust him." Ah, will not mercy's tender cry persuade you?—"He that believeth shall be saved." Must the weapon of destruction be pointed directly at you? Must you hear the dreadful threat—"He that believeth not shall be damned?" It is with you *now* as with that boy—your position is one of imminent peril in itself, and your slighting the Father's counsel is a matter of more terrible alarm, it makes peril more perilous. You must do it, or else you perish! Let go your hold! That is faith when the poor sinner lets go his hold, drops down, and so is saved; and the very thing which looks as if it would destroy him, is the means of his being saved. Oh! believe on Christ, poor sinners; believe on Christ. Ye who know your guilt and misery come, cast yourselves upon him; come, and trust my Master, and as he lives, before whom I stand, you shall never trust him in vain; but you shall find yourselves forgiven, and go your way rejoicing in Christ Jesus.

Spiritual Resurrection

A Sermon

(No. 127)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 12, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”—[Ephesians 2:1](#).

IT MIGHT NATURALLY be expected that I should have selected the topic of the resurrection on what is usually called the Easter Sabbath. I shall not do so; for although I have read portions which refer to that glorious subject, I have had pressed on my mind a subject which is not the resurrection of Christ, but which is in some measure connected with it—the resurrection of lost and ruined men by the Spirit of God in this life.

The apostle is here speaking, you will observe, of the church at Ephesus, and, indeed, of all those who were chosen in Christ Jesus, accepted in him, and redeemed with his blood; and he says of them, “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

What a solemn sight is presented to us by a dead body! When last evening trying to realize the thought, it utterly overcame me. The thought is overwhelming, that soon this body of mine must be a carnival for worms; that in and out of these places, where my eyes are glistening, foul things, the offspring of loathsomeness, shall crawl; that this body must be stretched in still, cold, abject, passive, death, must then become a noxious, nauseous thing, cast out even by those that loved me, who will say, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” Perhaps you can scarcely, in the moment I can afford you, appropriate the idea to yourselves. Does it not seem a strange thing, that you, who have walked to this place this morning, shall be carried to your graves; that the eyes with which you now behold me shall soon be glazed in everlasting darkness; that the tongues, which just now moved in song, shall soon be silent lumps of clay; and that your strong and stalwart frame, now standing to this place, will be unable to move a muscle, and become a loathsome thing, the brother of the worm and the sister of corruption? You can scarcely get hold of the idea; death doth such awful work with us, it is such a Vandal with this mortal fabric, it so rendeth to pieces this fair thing that God hath builded up, that we can scarcely bear to contemplate his works of ruin.

Now, endeavour, as well as you can, to get the idea of a dead corpse, and when you have so done, please to understand, that that is the metaphor employed in my text, to set forth the condition of your soul by nature. Just as the body is dead, incapable, unable, unfeeling, and soon about to become corrupt and putrid, so are we if we be unquickened by divine grace; dead in trespasses and sins, having within us death, which is capable of developing itself in worse and worse stages of sin and wickedness, until all of us here, left by God’s grace, should become loathsome beings; loathsome through sin and wickedness, even as the corpse

through natural decay. Understand, that the doctrine of the Holy Scripture is, that man by nature, since the fall, is dead; he is a corrupt and ruined thing; in a spiritual sense, utterly and entirely dead. And if any of us shall come to spiritual life, it must be by the quickening of God's Spirit, vouchsafed to us sovereignly through the good will of God the Father, not for any merits of our own, but entirely of his own abounding and infinite grace.

Now, this morning, I trust I shall not be tedious; I shall endeavour to make the subject as interesting as possible, and also endeavour to be brief. The general doctrine of this morning is, that every man that is born into the world is dead spiritually, and that spiritual life must be given by the Holy Spirit, and can be obtained from no other source. That general doctrine, I shall illustrate in rather a singular way. You remember that our Saviour raised three dead persons; I do not find that during his lifetime he caused more than three resurrections. The first was the young maiden, *the daughter of Jairus*, who, when she lay on her bed dead, rose up to life at the single utterance of Christ, "*Talitha cumi!*" The second was the case of *the widow's son*, who was on his bier, about to be carried to his tomb; and Jesus raised him up to life by saying, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." The third, and most memorable case, was that of *Lazarus*, who was not on his bed, nor on his bier, but in his tomb, ay, and corrupt too; but notwithstanding that, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the voice of his omnipotence, crying, "Lazarus, come forth," brought him out of the tomb.

I shall use these three facts as illustrations of *the different states of men*, though they be all thoroughly dead; secondly, as illustrations of *the different means of grace used for raising them*, though, after all, the same great agency is employed; and, in the third place, as illustrations of *the after experience of quickened men*; for though that to a great degree is the same, yet there are some points of difference.

I. I shall begin by noticing, then, first of all, THE CONDITION OF MEN BY NATURE. Men by nature are all dead. There is Jairus's daughter; she lies on her bed; she seems as if she were alive; her mother has scarce ceased to kiss her brow, her hand is still in her father's loving grasp, and he can scarcely think that she is dead; but dead she is, as thoroughly dead as she ever can be. Next comes the case of the young man brought out of his grave; he is more than dead, he has begun to be corrupt, the signs of decay are upon his face, and they are carrying him to his tomb; yet though there are more manifestations of death about him, he is no more dead than the other. He is just as dead; they are both dead, and death really knows of no degrees. The third case goes further still in the manifestation of death; for it is the case of which Martha, using strong words, said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days." And yet, mark you, the daughter of Jairus was as dead as Lazarus; though the manifestation of death was not so complete in her case. All were dead alike. I have in my congregation some blessed beings, fair to look upon; fair, I mean, in their character, as well as their outward appearance; they have about them everything that is good and lovely; but mark this, if they are unregenerate they are dead still. That girl, dead in the

room, upon her bed, had little about her that could show her death. Not yet had the loving finger closed the eyelid; there seemed to be a light still lingering in her eye; like a lily just nipped off; she was as fair as life itself. The worm had not yet begun to gnaw her cheek, the flush had not yet faded from her face; she seemed well-nigh alive. And so it is with some I have here. Ye have all that heart could wish for, except the one thing needful; ye have all things save love to the Saviour. Ye are not yet united to him by a living faith. Ah! then, I grieve to say it, ye are dead! ye are dead! As much dead as the worst of men, although your death is not so apparent. Again, I have in my presence young men who have grown to riper years than that fair damsel who died in her childhood. You have much about you that is lovely, but you have just begun to indulge in evil habits; you have not yet become the desperate sinner; you have not yet become altogether noxious in the eyes of other men; you are but beginning to sin, you are like the young man carried out on his bier; you have not yet become the confirmed drunkard; you have not yet begun to curse and blaspheme God; you are still accepted in good society; you are not yet cast out; but you are dead, thoroughly dead, just as dead as the third and worst case. But I dare say I have some characters that are illustrations of that case too. There is Lazarus in his tomb, rotten and putrid; and so there are some men not more dead than others, but their death has become more apparent, their character has become abominable, their deeds cry out against them, they are put out of decent society, the stone is rolled to the mouth of their tomb, men feel that they cannot hold acquaintance with them, for they have so utterly abandoned every sense of right, that we say, "Put them out of sight, we cannot endure them!" And yet these putrid ones may live; these last are not more dead than the maiden upon her bed, though the death has more fully revealed itself in their corruption. Jesus Christ must quicken the one as well as the other, and bring them all to know and love his name.

1. Now, then, I am about to enter into the minutiae of the difference of these three cases. I will take the case of the young maiden. I have her here to-day; I have many illustrations of her present before me; at least, I trust so. Now, will you allow me to point out all the differences? Here is the young maiden; look upon her; you can bear the sight; she is dead, but oh! *beauty lingereth there*; she is fair and lovely, though the life hath departed from her. In the young man's case there is no beauty; the worm hath begun to eat him; his honor hath departed. In the third case, there is absolute rottenness. But here there is beauty still upon her cheek. Is she not amiable? Is she not lovely? Would not all love her? Is she not to be admired, even to be imitated? Is she not fairest of the fair? Ay, that she is; but God the Spirit has not yet looked upon her; she has not yet bent her knee to Jesus, and cried for mercy; she has everything, except true religion. Alas! for her; alas! that so fair a character should be a dead one. Alas! my sister; alas! that thou, the benevolent, the kind one, should yet be, after all, dead in thy trespasses and sins. As Jesus wept over that young man who had kept all the commandments, and yet one thing he lacked, so weep I over thee this morning.

Alas! thou fair one, lovely in thy character, and amiable in thy carriage, why shouldst thou lie dead? For dead thou art, unless thou hast faith in Christ. Thine excellence, thy virtue, and thy goodness, shall avail thee nought; thou art dead, and dead thou must be, unless he make thee live.

Note, too, that in the case of this maiden, whom we have introduced to you, the daughter of Jairus, *she is yet caressed*; she has only been dead a moment or two, and the mother still presses her cheek with kisses. Oh! can she be dead? Do not the tears rain on her, as if they would sow the seeds of life in that dead earth again?—earth that looks fertile enough to bring forth life with but one living tear? Ay, but those salt tears are tears of barrenness. She liveth not; but she is still caressed. Not so the young man; he is put on the bier; no man will touch him any more, or else he will be utterly defiled. And as for Lazarus, he is shut up with a stone. But this young maiden is still caressed; so it is with many of you; you are loved even by the living in Sion; God's own people love you; the minister has often prayed for you; you are admitted into the assemblies of the saints, you sit with them as God's people, you hear as they hear, and you sing as they sing. Alas! for you; alas! for you, that you should still be dead! Oh! it grieves me to the heart, to think that some of you are all that heart could wish, except that one thing; yet lacking that which is the only thing that can deliver you. You are caressed by us, received by the living in Sion into their company and acquaintance, approved of and accepted; alas! that you should yet be without life! Oh! in your case, if you are saved, you will have to join with even the worst in saying, "I have been quickened by divine grace, or else I had never lived."

And now will you look at this maiden again? Note, *she has no grave clothes on her yet*; she is dressed in her own raiment; just as she retired to her bed a little sick, so lieth she there; not yet have the napkin and the shroud been wrapped about her; she still weareth the habiliments of sleep; she is not yet given up to death. Not so the young man yonder—he is in his grave clothes; not so Lazarus—he is bound hand and foot. But this young maiden hath no grave clothes upon her. So with the young person we wish to speak of this morning; she has as yet no evil habits, she hath not yet reached that point; the young man yonder has begun to have evil habits; and yon grey-headed sinner is bound hand and foot by them; but as yet she appeareth just like the living, she acteth just like the Christian; her habits are fair, goodly, and comely; there seemeth to be little ill about her. Alas! alas! that thou shouldst be dead, even in thy fairest raiment. Alas! thou who hast set the chaplet of benevolence on thy brow, thou who dost gird thyself with the white robes of outward purity, if thou art not born again, thou art dead still. Thy beauty shall fade away like a moth; and in the day of judgment thou wilt be severed from the righteous, unless God shall make thee live. Oh! I could weep over those young ones who seem at present to have been delivered from forming any habits which could lead them astray, but who are yet unquickened and unsaved. Oh! would to God, young man and young woman, you might in early years be quickened by the Spirit.

And will you notice, yet once more, that this young maiden's death was *a death confined to her chamber*. Not so with the young man; he was carried to the gate of the city, and much people saw him. Not so Lazarus; the Jews came to weep at his tomb. But this young woman's death is in her chamber. Ay, so it is with the young woman or the young man I mean to describe now. His sin is as yet a secret thing, kept to himself: as yet there has been no breaking forth of iniquity, but only the conception of it in the heart; just the embryo of lust, not as yet broken out into act. The young man has not yet drained the intoxicating cup, although he has had some whisperings of the sweetness of it; he has not yet run into the ways of wickedness, though he has had temptations thrust upon him; as yet he has kept his sin in his chamber, and most of it has been unseen. Alas! my brother, alas! my sister, that thou who in thine outward carriage art so good, should yet have sins in the chamber of thine heart, and death in the secrecy of thy being, which is as true a death as that of the grossest sinner, though not so thoroughly manifested. Would to God that thou couldst say, "And he hath quickened me, for with all my loveliness, and all my excellence, I was by nature dead in trespasses and sins." Come, let me just press this matter home. I have some in my congregation that I look upon with fear. Oh! my dear friends, my much loved friends, how many there are among you, I repeat, that are all that the heart could wish, except that one thing—that you love not my Master. Oh! ye young men who come up to the house of God, and who are outwardly so good; alas! for you, that you should lack the root of the matter. Oh! ye daughters of Sion, who are ever at the house of prayer, oh! that you should yet be without grace in your heart! Take heed, I beseech you, ye fairest, youngest, most upright, and most honest; when the dead are separated from the living, unless ye be regenerated, ye must go with the dead; though ye be never so fair and goodly, ye must be cast away, unless you live.

2. Thus, I have done with the first case; now we will go to the young man, who stands second. He is not more dead than the other, but *he is further gone*. Come, now, and stop the bier; you cannot look upon him! Why, the cheek is sunken—there is a hollowness there; not as in the case of the maiden, whose cheek was still round and ruddy. And the eye—oh! what a blackness is there! Look on him; you can see that the gnawings of the worm will soon burst forth; corruption hath begun its work. So it is with some young men I have here. They are not what they were in their childhood, when their habits were proper and correct; but mayhap they have just been enticed into the house of the strange woman; they have just been tempted to go astray from the path of rectitude; their corruption is just breaking forth; they disdain now to sit at their mother's apron-strings; they think it foul scorn to keep to the rules that bind the moral! They! they are free, they say, and they will be free; they will live a jolly and a happy life; and so they run on in boisterous yet wicked merriment, and betray the marks of death about them. They have gone further than the maiden; she was still fair and comely; but here there is something that is the afterwork of death. The maiden

was caressed, but the young man is untouched; he lieth on the bier, and though men bear him on their shoulders, yet there is a shrinking from him; he is dead, and it is known that he is dead. Young man, you have got as far as that; you know that good men shrink from you. It was but yesterday that your mother's tears fell fast and thick as she warned your younger brother to avoid your sin; your very sister, when she kissed you but this morning, prayed to God that you might get good in this house of prayer; but you know that of late she has been ashamed of you; your conversation has become so profane and wicked, that even she could scarce endure it. There are houses in which you were once welcome; where you once bowed your knee with them at the family prayer, and your name was mentioned too; but now you do not choose to go there, for when you go, you are treated with reserve. The good man of the house feels that he could not let his son go with you, for you would contaminate him; he does not sit down now side by side with you, as he used to do, and talk about the best things; he lets you sit in the room as a matter of mere courtesy; he stands far away from you, as it were; he feels that you have not a spirit congenial with his own. You are a little shunned; you are not quite avoided; you are still received amongst the people of God, yet there is a coldness that manifests that they understand that you are not a living one.

And note, too, that this young man, though carried out to his grave, was not like the maiden; she was in the garments of life, but *he was wrapped in the cerements of death*. So many of you have begun to form habits that are evil; you know that already the screw of the devil is tightening on your finger. Once it was a screw you could slip off or on; you said you were master of your pleasures—now your pleasures are master of you. Your habits are not now commendable, you know they are not; you stand convicted while I speak to you this morning; you know your ways are evil. Ah! young man, thou hast not yet gone so far as the open profligate and desperately profane, take heed, thou art dead! thou art dead! and unless the Spirit quicken thee, thou shalt be cast into the valley of Gehenna, to be the food of that worm which never dieth, but eateth souls throughout eternity. And ah! young man, I weep, I weep over thee; thou art not yet so far gone, that they have rolled the stone against thee; thou art not yet become obnoxious; thou art not yet the staggering drunkard, nor yet the blasphemous infidel; thou hast much that is ill about thee, but thou hast not gone all the lengths yet. Take heed; thou wilt go further still; there is no stopping in sin. When the worm is there, you cannot put your finger on it, and say, "Stop; eat no more." No, it will go on, to your utter ruin. May God save you now, ere you shall come to that consummation for which hell so sighs, and which heaven can alone avert.

One more remark concerning this young man. The maiden's death was in her chamber; *the young man's death was in the city gates*. In the first case I described, the sin was secret. But, young man, your sin is not. You have gone so far that your habits are openly wicked; you have dared to sin in the face of God's sun. You are not as some others—seemingly good;

but you go out and openly say, "I am no hypocrite; I dare to do wrong. I do not profess to be righteous; I know I am a scapegrace rascal. I have gone astray, and I am not ashamed to sin in the street." Ah! young man, young man! Thy father, perhaps, is saying now, "Would God that I had died for him—would God that I had seen him buried in his grave, ere he should have gone to such a length in wickedness! Would God that when I first saw him, and mine eye was gladdened with my son, I had seen him the next minute smitten with disease and death! Oh, would to God that his infant spirit had been called to heaven, that he might not have lived to bring in this way my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave!" Your sport in the city gates is misery in your father's house; your open merriment before the world brings agony into a mother's heart. Oh, I beseech you, stay. Oh, Lord Jesus! touch the bier this morning! Stop some young man in his evil habits, and say unto him, "Arise!" Then will he join with us in confessing that those who are alive have been quickened by Jesus, through the Spirit, though they were dead in trespasses and sins.

3. Now we come to the third and last case—LAZARUS DEAD AND BURIED. Ah! dear friends, I cannot take you to see Lazarus in his grave. Stand, oh stand away from him. Whither shall we flee to avoid the noxious odour of that reeking corpse? Ah, whither shall we flee? There is no beauty there; we dare not look upon it. There is not even the gloss of life left. Oh, hideous spectacle! I must not attempt to describe it; words would fail me, and you would be too much shocked. Nor dare I tell the character of some men present here. I should be ashamed to tell the things which some of you have done. This cheek might mantle with a blush to tell the deeds of darkness which some of the ungodly of this world habitually practise. Ah, the last stage of death, the last stage of corruption, oh, how hideous; but the last stage of sin, hideous far more! Some writers seem to have an aptitude for puddling in this mud, and digging up this miry clay; I confess that I have none. I cannot describe to you the lusts and vices of a fullgrown sinner. I cannot tell you what are the debaucheries, the degrading lusts, the devilish, the bestial sins into which wicked men will run, when spiritual death has had its perfect work in them, and sin has manifested itself in all its fearful wickedness. I may have some here. They are not Christians. They are not, like the young maiden, still fondled, nor even, like the young man, still kept in the funeral procession: no, they have gone so far that decent people avoid them. Their very wife, when they go into the house, rushes upstairs to be out of the way. They are scorned. Such an one is the harlot, from whom one's head is turned in the very street. Such an one is the openly profligate, to whom we give wide quarters, lest we touch him. He is a man that is far gone. The stone is rolled before him. No one calls him respectable. He dwelleth, perhaps, in some back slum of a dirty lane; he knoweth not where to go. Even as he stands in this place, he feels that if his next-door neighbour knew his guilt he would give him a wide berth, and stand far away from him; for he has come to the last stage; he has no marks of life; he is utterly rotten. And mark; as in the case of the maiden the sin was in the chamber, secret; in the next case it was

in the open streets, public; but in this case it is secret again. It is in the tomb. For you will mark that men, when they are only half gone in wickedness, do it openly; but when they are fully gone their lust becomes so degrading that they are obliged to do it in secret. They are put into the grave, in order that all may be hidden. Their lust is one which can only be perpetrated at midnight; a deed which can only be done when shrouded by the astonished curtains of darkness. Have I any such here? I cannot tell that I have many; but still I have some. Ah! in being constantly visited by penitents I have sometimes blushed for this city of London. There are merchants whose names stand high and fair. Shall I tell it here? I know it on the best authority, and the truest, too. There are some who have houses large and tall, who on the exchange are reputable and honorable, and everyone admits them and receives them into their society; but ah! there are some of the merchants of London who practise lusts that are abominable. I have in my church and congregation—and I dare to say what men dare to do—I have in my congregation women whose ruin and destruction have been wrought by some of the most respected men in respectable society. Few would venture on so bold a statement as that; but if you boldly do the thing, I must speak of it. It is not for God's ambassador to wash his mouth beforehand; let him boldly reprove, as men do boldly sin. Ah! there are some that are a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty; some whose character is hideous beyond all hideousness. They have to be covered up in the tomb of secrecy; for men would scout them from society, and hiss them from existence, if they knew all. And yet—and now comes a blessed interposition—yet this last case may be saved as well as the first, and as easily too. The rotten Lazarus may come out of his tomb, as well as the slumbering maiden from her bed. The last—the most corrupt, the most desperately abominable, may yet be quickened; and he may join in exclaiming, "And I have been quickened, though I was dead in trespasses and sins." I trust you will understand what I wish to convey—that the death is the same in all cases; but the manifestations of it is different; and that the life must come from God, and from God alone.

II. And now I will go on to another point—THE QUICKENING. These three persons were all quickened, and they were all quickened by the same being—that is by Jesus. But they were all quickened in a different manner. Note, first, the young maiden on her bed. When she was brought to life, it is said, "Jesus took her by the hand and said, maiden, arise." It was a still small voice. Her heart received its pulse again, and she lived. It was the gentle touching of the hand—no open demonstration—and the soft voice was heard—"arise." Now, usually when God converts young people in the first stage of sin, before they have formed evil habits, he does it in a gentle manner; not by the terrors of the law, the tempest, fire and smoke, but he makes them like Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened" that she received the word. On such, "it droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven upon the place beneath." With hardened sinners grace cometh down in showers that rattle on them; but in

young converts it often cometh gently. There is just the sweet breathing of the spirit. They perhaps scarcely think it is a true conversion; but true it is, if they are brought to life.

Now note the next case. Christ did not do the same thing with the young man that he did with the daughter of Jairus. No; the first thing he did was, he put his hand, not on him, mark you, but *on the bier*; “and they that bare it stood still.” and after that, without touching the young man, he said in a louder voice, “Young man, I say unto thee, arise!” Note the difference: the young maiden’s new life was given to her secretly. The young man’s was given more publicly. It was done in the very street of the city. The maiden’s life was given gently by a touch; but in the young man’s case it must be done, not by the touching of him, but by the touching of the bier. Christ takes away from the young man his means of pleasure. He commands his companions, who by bad example are bearing him on his bier to his grave, to stop, and then there is a partial reformation for awhile, and after that there comes the strong out-spoken voice—“Young man, I say unto thee, arise!”

But now comes the worst case; and will you please at your leisure at home to notice what preparations Christ made for the last case of Lazarus? When he raised the maiden, he walked up into the chamber, smiling, and said, “She is not dead, but sleepeth.” When he raised the young man, he said to the mother, “Weep not.” Not so when he came to the last case; there was something more terrible about that: it was, *a man in his grave corrupting*. It was on that occasion you read, “Jesus wept;” and after he had wept it is said that “he groaned in his spirit;” and then he said, “Take away the stone;” and then there came the prayer, “I know that thou hearest me always.” And then, will you notice, there came, what is not expressed so fully in either of the other cases. It is written, “Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!” It is not written that he cried with the loud voice to either of the others. He spake to them; it was his word that saved all of them; but in the case of Lazarus, he cried to him in a loud voice. Now, I have, perhaps, some of the last characters here—the worst of the worst. Ah! sinner; may the Lord quicken thee! But it is a work that makes the Saviour weep. I think when he comes to call some of you from your death in sin who have gone to the utmost extremity of guilt, he comes weeping and sighing for you. There is a stone there to be rolled away—your bad and evil habits; and when that stone is taken away, a still small voice will not do for you; it must be the loud crashing voice, like the voice of the Lord, which breaketh the cedars of Lebanon—“Lazarus, come forth!” John Bunyan was one of those rotten ones. What strong means were used in his case! Terrible dreams, fearful convulsions, awful shakings to and fro—all had to be employed to make him live. And yet some of you think, when God is terrifying you by the thunders of Sinai, that really he does not love you. It is not so; you were so dead that it needed a loud voice to arrest your ears.

III. This is an interested subject: I wish I could dilate upon it, but my voice fails me; and therefore, permit me to go to the third point very briefly. THE AFTER-EXPERIENCE OF THESE THREE PEOPLE WAS DIFFERENT—at least, you gather it from the commands

of Christ. As soon as the maiden was alive, Christ said, "Give her meat;" as soon as the young man was alive "he delivered him to his mother;" as soon as Lazarus was alive, he said, "Loose him, and let him go." I think there is something in this. When young people are converted who have not yet acquired evil habits; when they are saved before they become obnoxious in the eyes of the world, the command is, "*Give them meat.*" Young people want instruction; they want building up in the faith; they generally lack knowledge; they have not the deep experience of the older man; they do not know so much about sin, nor even so much about salvation as the older man that has been a guilty sinner; they need to be fed. So that our business as ministers when the young lambs are brought in, is to remember the injunction, "Feed my lambs;" take care of them; give them plenty of meat. Young people, search after an instructive minister; seek after instructive books; search the Scriptures, and seek to be instructed: that is your principal business. "Give her meat."

The next case was a different one. He gave the young man up to his mother. Ah! that is just what he will do with you young man, if he makes you live. As sure as ever you are converted, he will give you up to your mother again. You were with her when you first as a babe sat on her knee; and that is where you will have to go again. Oh, yes; grace knits together again the ties which sin has loosed. Let a young man become abandoned; he casts off the tender influence of a sister and the kind associations of a mother: but if he is converted, one of the first things he will do will be to find the mother out, and the sister out, and he will find a charm in their society that he never knew before. You that have gone into sin, let this be your business, if God has saved you. Seek good company. Just as Christ delivered the young man to his mother, do you seek after your mother, the church. Endeavour as much as possible to be found in the company of the righteous; for, as you were carried before to your grave by bad companions, you need to be led to heaven by good men.

And then comes the case of Lazarus. "*Loose him, and let him go.*" I do not know how it is that the young man never was loosed. I have been looking through every book I have about the manners and customs of the East, and have not been able to get a clue to the difference between the young man and Lazarus. The young man, as soon as Christ spoke to him, "sat up and began to speak;" but Lazarus, in his grave-clothes, lying in the niche of the tomb, could do no more than just shuffle himself out from the hole that was cut in the wall, and then stand leaning against it. He could not speak; he was bound about in a napkin. Why was it not so with the young man? I am inclined to think that the difference lay in the difference of their wealth. The young man was the son of a widow. Very likely he was only wrapped up in a few common things, and not so tightly bound about as Lazarus. Lazarus was of a rich family; very likely they wrapped him up with more care. Whether it was so or not, I do not know. What I want to hint at is this: when a man is far gone into sin, Christ does this for him—he breaks off his evil habits. Very likely the old sinner's experience will not be a feeding experience. It will not be the experience of walking with the saints. It will be as much

as he can do to pull off his grave-clothes, to get rid of his old habits; perhaps to his death he will have to be rending off bit after bit of the cerements in which he has been wrapped. There is his drunkenness; oh, what a fight will he have with that! There is his lust; what a combat he will have with that, for many a month! There is his habit of swearing; how often will an oath come into his mouth, and he will have as hard work as he can to thrust it down again! There is his pleasure-seeking: he has given it up; but how often will his companions be after him, to get him to go with them. His life will be ever afterwards a loosing and letting go; for he will need it till he cometh up to be with God for ever and ever.

And now, dear friends, I must close by asking you this question—*have you been quickened?* And I must warn you that, good, or bad, or indifferent, if you have never been quickened you are dead in sins, and must be cast away at the last. I must bid you, however, who have gone the furthest into sin, not to despair; Christ can quicken you as well as the best. Oh, that he would quicken you, and lead you to believe! Oh, that he now would cry to some, “Lazarus, come forth!” and make some harlot virtuous, some drunkard sober. Oh! that he would bless the word, especially to the young and amiable and lovely, by making them now the heirs of God and the children of Christ!

And now but one thing I have to say to those who are quickened; and then adieu this morning, and may God bless you! My dear friends, you who are quickened, let me advise you to take care of the devil; he will be sure to be after you. Keep your mind always employed, and so you will escape him. Oh, be aware of his devices; seek to “keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake.

The Uses of the Law

A Sermon

(No. 128)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 19, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Wherefore then serveth the law?”—[Galatians 3:19](#).

THE APOSTLE, by a highly ingenious and powerful argument, had proved that the law was never intended by God for the justification and salvation of man. He declares that God made a covenant of grace with Abraham long before the law was given on Mount Sinai; that Abraham was not present at Mount Sinai, and that, therefore, there could have been no alteration of the covenant made there by his consent; that, moreover, Abraham’s consent was never asked as to any alteration of the covenant, without which consent the covenant could not have been lawfully changed, and, besides that, that the covenant stands fast and firm, seeing it was made to Abraham’s seed, as well as to Abraham himself. “This I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” Therefore, no inheritance and no salvation ever can be obtained by the law. Now, extremes are the error of ignorance. Generally, when men believe one truth, they carry it so far as to deny another; and, very frequently, the assertion of a cardinal truth leads men to generalise on other particulars, and so to make falsehoods out of truth. The objection supposed may be worded thus: “You say, O Paul, that the law cannot justify; surely then the law is good for nothing at all; ‘Wherefore then serveth the law?’ If it will not save a man, what is the good of it? If of itself it will never take a man to heaven, why was it written? Is it not a useless thing?” The apostle might have replied to his opponent with a sneer—he must have said to him, “Oh, fool, and slow of heart to understand. Is it proved that a thing is utterly useless because it is not intended for every purpose in the world? Will you say that, because iron cannot be eaten, therefore, iron is not useful? And because gold cannot be the food of man, will you, therefore, cast gold away, and call it worthless dross? Yet on your foolish supposition you must do so. For, because I have said the law cannot save, you have foolishly asked me what is the use of it? and you foolishly suppose God’s law is good for nothing, and can be of no value whatever.” This objection is, generally, brought forward by two sorts of people. First, by mere cavillers who do not like the gospel, and wish to pick all sorts of holes in it. They can tell us what they do not believe; but they do not tell us what they do believe. They would fight with everybody’s doctrines and sentiments, but they would be at a loss if they were asked to sit down and write their own opinions. They do not seem to have got much

further than the genius of the monkey, which can pull everything to pieces, but can put nothing together. Then, on the other hand, there is the Antinomian, who says, “Yes, I know I am saved by grace alone;” and then breaks the law—says, it is not binding on him, even as a rule of life; and asks, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” throwing it out of his door as an old piece of furniture only fit for the fire, because, forsooth, it is not adapted to save his soul. Why, a thing may have many uses, if not a particular one. It is true that the law cannot save; and yet it is equally true that the law is one of the highest works of God, and is deserving of all reverence, and extremely useful when applied by God to the purposes for which it was intended.

Yet, pardon me my friends, if I just observe that this is a very natural question, too. If you read the doctrine of the apostle Paul you find him declaring that the law condemns all mankind. Now, just let us for one single moment take a bird’s eye view of the works of the law in this world. Lo, I see, the law given upon Mount Sinai. The very hill doth quake with fear. Lightnings and thunders are the attendants of those dreadful syllables which make the hearts of Israel to melt Sinai seemeth altogether on the smoke. The Lord came from Paran, and the Holy One from Mount Sinai; “He came with ten thousand of his saints.” Out of his mouth went a fiery law for them. It was a dread law even when it was given, and since then from that Mount of Sinai an awful lava of vengeance has run down, to deluge, to destroy, to burn, and to consume the whole human race, if it had not been that Jesus Christ had stemmed its awful torrent, and bidden its waves of fire be still. If you could see the world without Christ in it, simply under the law you would see a world in ruins, a world with God’s black seal put upon it, stamped and sealed for condemnation; you would see men, who, if they knew their condition, would have their hands on their loins and be groaning all their days—you would see men and women condemned, lost, and ruined; and in the uttermost regions you would see the pit that is digged for the wicked, into which the whole earth must have been cast if the law had its way, apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Ay, beloved, the law is a great deluge which would have drowned the world with worse than the water of Noah’s flood, it is a great fire which would have burned the earth with a destruction worse than that which fell on Sodom, it is a stern angel with a sword, athirst for blood, and winged to slay; it is a great destroyer sweeping down the nations; it is the great messenger of God’s vengeance sent into the world. Apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, the law is nothing but the condemning voice of God thundering against mankind. “Wherefore then serveth the law?” seems a very natural question. Can the law be of any benefit to man? Can that Judge who puts on a black cap and condemns us all this Lord Chief Justice Law, can he help in salvation? Yes, he did; and you shall see how he does it, if God shall help us while we preach. “Wherefore then serveth the law?”

I. The first use of the law is *to manifest to man his guilt*. When God intends to save a man, the first thing he does with him is to send the law to him, to show him how guilty,

how vile, how ruined he is, and in how dangerous a position. You see that man lying there on the edge of the precipice; he is sound asleep, and just on the perilous verge of the cliff. One single movement, and he will roll over and be broken in pieces on the jagged rocks beneath, and nothing more shall be heard of him. How is he to be saved? What shall be done for him—what shall be done! It is our position; we, too, are lying on the brink of ruin, but we are insensible of it. God, when he begins to save us from such an imminent danger, sendeth his law, which, with a stout kick, rouses us up, makes us open our eyes, we look down on our terrible danger, discover our miseries, and then it is we are in a right position to cry out for salvation, and our salvation comes to us. The law acts with man as the physician does when he takes the film from the eye of the blind. Self-righteous men are blind men, though they think themselves good and excellent. The law takes that film away, and lets them discover how vile they are, and how utterly ruined and condemned if they are to abide under the sentence of the law.

Instead, however, of treating this doctrinally, I shall treat it practically, and come home to each of your consciences. My, hearer, does not the law of God convince you of sin this morning? Under the hand of God's Spirit does it not make you feel that you have been guilty, that you deserve to be lost, that you have incurred the fierce anger of God? Look ye here, have ye not broken these ten commandments; even in the letter have ye not broken them? Who is there among you who hath always honored his father and mother? Who is there among us who hath always spoken the truth? Have we not sometimes borne false witness against our neighbor? Is there one person here who has not made unto himself another God, and loved himself, or his business, or his friends, more than he has Jehovah, the God of the whole earth? Which of you hath not coveted your neighbour's house, or his manservant, or his ox, or his ass? We are all guilty with regard to every letter of the law; we have all of us transgressed the commandments. And if we really understood these commandments, and felt that they condemned us, they would have this useful influence on us of showing us our danger, and so of leading us to fly to Christ. But, my hearers, does not this law condemn you, because even if you should say you have not broken the letter of it, yet you have violated the spirit of it. What, though you have never killed, yet we are told, he that is angry with his brother is a murderer. As a negro said once, "Sir, I thought me no kill—me innocent there; but when I heard that he that hateth his brother is a murderer, then me cry guilty, for me have killed twenty men before breakfast very often, for I have been angry with many of them very often." This law does not only mean what it says in words, but it has deep things hidden in its bowels. It says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but it means, as Jesus has it, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." It says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," it meaneth that we should reverence God in every place, and have his fear before our eyes, and should always pay respect unto his ordinances and evermore walk in his fear and love. Ay, my brethren,

surely there is not one here so fool-hardy in self-righteousness as to say, "I am innocent." The spirit of the law condemns us. And this is its useful property; it humbles us, makes us know we are guilty, and so are we led to receive the Saviour.

Mark this, moreover, my dear hearers, *one breach of this law is enough to condemn us for ever*. He that breaketh the law in one point is guilty of the whole. The law demands that we should obey every command, and one of them broken, the whole of them are injured. It is like a vase of surpassing workmanship, in order to destroy it you need not shiver it to atoms, make but the smallest fracture in it and you have destroyed its perfection. As it is a perfect law which we are commanded to obey, and to obey perfectly, make but one breach thereof and though we be ever so innocent we can hope for nothing from the law; except the voice, "Ye are condemned, ye are condemned, ye are condemned." Under this aspect of the matter ought not the law to strip many of us of all our boasting? Who is there that shall rise in his place and say, "Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men are?" Surely there cannot be one among you who can go home and say, "I have tithed mint and cummin; I have kept all the commandments from my youth?" Nay, if this law be brought home to the conscience and the heart we shall stand with the publican, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The only reason why a man thinks he is righteous is because he does not know the law. You think you have never broken it because you do not understand it. There are some of you most respectable people; you think you have been so good that you can go to heaven by your own works. You would not exactly say so, but you secretly think so; you have devoutly taken the sacrament, you have been mightily pious in attending your church or chapel regularly, you are good to the poor, generous and upright, and you say, "I shall be saved by my works." Nay, sir, look to the flame that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair. The law can do nothing for us except condemn us. The utmost it can do is to whip us out of our boasted self-righteousness and drive us to Christ. It puts a burden on our backs and makes us ask Christ to take it off. It is like a lancet, it probes the wound. It is, to use a parable as when some dark cellar has not been opened for years and is full of all kinds of loathsome creatures, we may walk through it not knowing they are there. But the law comes, takes the shutters down, lets light in, and then we discover what a vile heart we have, and how unholy our lives have been; and, then, instead of boasting, we are made to fall on our faces and cry, "Lord, save or I perish. Oh, save me for thy mercy's sake, or else I shall be cast away." Oh, ye self-righteous ones now present, who think yourselves so good that ye can mount to heaven by your works—blind horses, perpetually going round the mill and making not one inch of progress—do you think to take the law upon your shoulders as Sampson did the gates of Gaza? Do you imagine that you can perfectly keep this law of God? Will you dare to say, you have not broken it. Nay, surely, you will confess, though it be in but an under tone, "I have revolted." Then, this know: the law can do nothing for you in the matter of forgiveness. All it can do is just this: It can make you feel you are nothing at all; it can strip

you; it can bruise you; it can kill you, but it can neither quicken, nor clothe, nor cleanse—it was never meant to do that. Oh, art thou this morning, my hearer, sad, because of sin? Dost thou feel that thou hast been guilty? Dost thou acknowledge thy transgression? Dost thou confess thy wandering? Hear me, then, as God’s ambassador, God hath mercy upon sinners. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And though you have broken the law, he has kept it. Take his righteousness to be yours. Cast yourself upon him. Come to him now, stripped and naked and take his robe as your covering, Come to him, black and filthy, and wash yourself in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; and then you shall know “wherefore then serveth the law?” That is the first point.

II. Now, the second. *The law serves to slay all hope of salvation of a reformed life.* Most men when they discover themselves to be guilty, avow that they will reform. They say, “I have been guilty and have deserved God’s wrath, but for the future I will seek to win a stock of merits which shall counterbalance all my old sins.” In steps the law, puts its hand on the sinner’s mouth, and says, “Stop, you cannot do that, it is impossible.” I will show you how the law does this. It does it partly thus, by reminding the man that *future obedience can be no atonement for past guilt.* To use a common metaphor that the poor may thoroughly understand me, you have run up a score at your chop. Well, you cannot pay it. You go off to Mrs. Brown, your shopkeeper, and you say to her, “Well, I am sorry, ma’am, that through my husband being out of work,” and all that, “I know I shall never be able to pay you. It is a very great debt I owe you, but, if you please ma’am, if you forgive me this debt I will never get into your debt any more; I will always pay for all I have.” “Yes,” she would say, “but that will not square our accounts. If you do pay for all you have, it would be no more than you ought to do. But what about the old bills? How are they to be receipted? They won’t be receipted by all your fresh payments.” That is just what men do towards God. “True,” they say, “I have gone far astray I know; but then I won’t do so any more.” Ah, it was time you threw away such child’s talk. You do but manifest your rampant folly by such a hope. Can you wipe away your transgression by future obedience? Ah, no. The old debt must be paid somehow. God’s justice is inflexible, and the law tells you all your requirements can make no atonement for the past. You must have an atonement through Christ Jesus the Lord. “But,” says the man, “I will try and be better, and then I think I shall have mercy given to me.” Then the law steps in and says, “You are going to try and keep me, are you? Why, man, you cannot do it.” *Perfect obedience in the future is impossible.* And the ten commandments are held up, and if any awakened sinner will but look at them, he will turn away and say, “It is impossible for me to keep them.” “Why, man, you say you will be obedient in the future. You have not been obedient in the past, and there is no likelihood that you will keep God’s commandments in time to come. You say you will avoid the evils of the past. You cannot. ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.’” But you say “I will take greater heed to my ways.” “Sir, you will

not; the temptation that overcame you yesterday will overcome you to-morrow. But, mark this, if you could, you could not win salvation by it.” The law tells you that unless you perfectly obey you cannot be saved by your doings, it tells you that one sin will make a flaw in it all, that one transgression will spoil your whole obedience. It is a spotless garment that you must wear in heaven; it is only an unbroken law which God can accept. So, then, the law answers this purpose, to tell men that their acquirements, their amendings, and their doings, are of no use whatever in the matter of salvation. It is theirs to come to Christ, to get A new heart and a right spirit; to get the evangelical repentance which needeth not to be repented of, that so they may put their trust in Jesus and receive pardon through his blood. “Wherefore then serveth the law?” It serveth this purpose, as Luther hath it, the purpose of a hammer. Luther, you know, is very strong on the subject of the law. He says, “For if any be not a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, and outwardly refrain from sin, as the Pharisee did, which is mentioned in the gospel, he would swear that he is righteous, and therefore he conceiveth an opinion of righteousness, and presumeth of his good works and merits. Such a one God cannot otherwise mollify and humble, that he may acknowledge his misery and damnation, but by the law, for that is the hammer of death, the thundering of hell, and the lightning of God’s wrath, that beateth to powder the obstinate and senseless hypocrites. For as long as the opinion of righteousness abideth in man, so long there abideth also in him incomprehensible pride, presumption, security, hatred of God, contempt of his grace and mercy, ignorance of the promises and of Christ. The preaching of free remission of sins, through Christ, cannot enter into the heart of such a one, neither can he feel any taste or savor thereof; for that mighty rock and adamant wall, to wit, the opinion of righteousness, wherewith the heart is environed, doth resist it. Wherefore the law is that hammer, that fire, that mighty strong wind, and that terrible earthquake rending the mountains, and breaking the rocks, ([1 Kings 19:11-13](#)) that is to say, the proud and obstinate hypocrites. Elijah, not being able to abide these terrors of the law, which by these things are signified, covered his face with his mantle. Notwithstanding, when the tempest ceased, of which he was a beholder, there came a soft and a gracious wind, in the which the Lord was; but it behoved that the tempest of fire, of wind, and the earthquake should pass, before the Lord should reveal himself in that gracious wind.”

III. And now, a step further. You that know the grace of God can follow me in this next step. *The law is intended to show man the misery which will, fall upon him through his sin.* I speak from experience, though young I be, and many of you who hear me will hear this with ears of attention, because you have felt the same. There was a time with me, when but young in years, I felt with much sorrow the evil of sin. My bones waxed old with my roaring all day long. Day and night God’s hand was heavy upon me. There was a time when he seared me with visions, and affrighted me by dreams; when by day I hungered for deliverance, for my soul fasted within me: I feared lest the very skies should fall upon me, and crush my

guilty soul. God's law had got hold upon me, and was strewing me my misery. If I slept at night I dreamed of the bottomless pit, and when I awoke I seemed to feel the misery I had dreamed. Up to God's house I went; my song was but a groan. To my chamber I retired, and there with tears and groans I offered up my prayer, without a hope and without a refuge. I could then say with David, "The owl is my partner and the bittern is my companion," for God's law was flogging me with its ten-thonged whip, and then rubbing me with brine afterwards, so that I did shake and quiver with pain and anguish, and my soul chose strangling rather than life, for I was exceeding sorrowful. Some of you have had the same. The law was sent on purpose to do that. But, you will ask, "Why that misery?" I answer, that misery was sent for this reason: that I might then be made to cry to Jesus. Our heavenly Father does not usually make us seek Jesus till he has whipped us clean out of all our confidence; he cannot make us in earnest after heaven till he has made us feel something of the intolerable tortures of an aching conscience, which has foretaste of hell. Do you not remember, my hearer, when you used to awake in the morning, and the first thing you took up was *Alleine's Alarm*, or *Baxter's Call to the Unconverted*? Oh, those books, those books, in my childhood I read and devoured them when under a sense of guilt, but they were like sitting at the foot of Sinai. When I turned to Baxter, I found him saying some such things as these:—"Sinner, bethink thee, within an hour thou mayest be in hell. Bethink thee; thou mayest soon be dying—death is even now gnawing at thy cheek. What wilt thou do when thou standest before the bar of God without a Saviour? Wilt thou tell him thou hadst no time to spend on religion? Will not that empty excuse melt into thin air? Oh, sinner, wilt thou, then, dare to insult thy Maker? Wilt thou, then, dare to scoff at him? Bethink thee; the flames of hell are hot and the wrath of God is heavy. Were thy bones of steel, and thy ribs of brass, thou mightest quiver with fear. Oh, hadst thou the strength of a giant, thou couldst not wrestle with the Most High. What wilt thou do when he shall tear thee in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver thee? What wilt thou do when he shall fire off his ten great guns at thee? The first commandment shall say, 'Crush him; he hath broken me!' The second shall say, 'Damn him; he hath broken me!' The third shall say, 'A curse upon him; he hath broken me!' And so shall they all let fly upon thee; and thou without a shelter, without a place to flee to, and without a hope." Ah! you have not forgotten the days when no hymn seemed suitable to you but the one that began,

 "Stoop down my soul that used to rise
 Converse awhile with death
 Think how a gasping mortal lies,
 And pants away his breath."
 Or else,
 "That awful day shall surely come,
 The 'pointed hour makes haste,

When I must stand before my Judge,
And pass the solemn test.”

Ay, that was why the law was sent—to convince us of sin, to make us shake and shiver before God. Oh! you that are self-righteous, let me speak to you this morning with just a word or two of terrible and burning earnestness. Remember, sirs, the day is coming when a crowd more vast than this shall be assembled on the plains of earth; when on a great white throne the Saviour, Judge of men, shall sit. Now, he is come; the book is opened; the glory of heaven is displayed, rich with triumphant love, and burning with unquenchable vengeance; ten thousand angels are on either hand; and you are standing to be tried. Now, self-righteous man, tell me now that you went to church three times a day! Come, man, tell me now that you kept all the commandments! Tell me now that you are not guilty! Come before him with a receipt of your mint, and your anise, and your cummin! Come along with you! Where are you? Oh, you are fleeing. You are crying, “Rocks hide us; mountains on us fall.” What are you after, man? Why, you were so fair on earth that none dare to speak to you; you were so good and so comely; why do you run away? Come, man, pluck up courage; come before thy Maker; tell him that thou wert honest, sober, excellent, and that thou deservest to be saved! Why dost thou delay to repeat thy boastings? Out with it—come, say it! No, you will not. I see you still flying, with shrieks, away from your Maker’s presence. There will be none found to stand before him, then, in their own righteousness. But look! look! look! I see a man coming forward out of that motley throng; he marches forward with a steady step, and with a smiling eye. What! is there any man found who shall dare to approach the dread tribunal of God? What! is there one who dares to stand before his Maker? Yes, there is one; he comes forward, and he cries, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Do you not shudder? Will not the mountains of wrath swallow him? Will not God launch that dreadful thunderbolt against him? No; listen while he confidently proceeds: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that hath risen again.” And I see the right hand of God outstretched—“Come, ye blessed, enter the kingdom prepared for you.” Now is fulfilled the verse which you once sweetly sang:—

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, through thy blood, absolv’d I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”

IV. And now, my dear friends, I am afraid of wearying you; therefore, let me briefly hint at one other thought. “Wherefore then serveth the law.” *It was sent into the world to shew the value of a Saviour.* Just as foils set off jewels, and as dark spots make bright tints more bright, so doth the law make Christ appear the fairer and more heavenly. I hear the law of God curse, but how harsh its voice. Jesus says, “come unto me;” oh, what music! all the more musical after the discord of the law. I see the law condemns; I behold Christ

obeying it. Oh! how ponderous that price—when I know how weighty was the demand! I read the commandments, and I find them strict and awfully severe—oh! how holy must Christ have been to obey all these for me! Nothing makes me value my Saviour more than seeing the law condemn me. When I know this law stands in my way, and like a flaming cherubim will not let me enter paradise, then I can tell how sweetly precious must Jesus Christ's righteousness be, which is a passport to heaven, and gives me grace to enter there.

V. And, lastly, "Wherefore serveth the law." It was sent into the world *to keep Christian men from self-righteousness*. Christian men—do they ever get self-righteous? Yes, that they do. The best Christian man in the world will find it hard work to keep himself from boasting, and from being self-righteous. John Knox on his death-bed was attacked with self-righteousness. The last night of his life on earth, he slept some hours together, during which he uttered many deep and heavy moans. Being asked why he moaned so deeply, he replied, "I have during my life sustained many assaults of Satan; but at present he has assaulted me most fearfully, and put forth all his strength to make an end of me at once. The cunning Serpent has labored to persuade me, that I have merited heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God, who has enabled me to quench this fiery dart, by suggesting to me such passages as these: 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' and, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'" Yes, and each of us have felt the same. I have often felt myself rather amused at some of my brethren, who have come to me, and said, "I trust the Lord will keep you humble," when they themselves were not only as proud as they were high, but a few inches over. They have been most sincere in prayer that I should be humble, unwittingly nursing their own pride by their own imaginary reputation for humility. I have long since given up entreating people to be humble, because it naturally tends to make them proud. A man is apt to say, "Dear me, these people are afraid I shall be proud; I must have something to be proud of." Then we say to ourselves, "I will not let them see it;" and we try to keep our pride down, but after all, are as proud as Lucifer within. I find that the proudest and most self-righteous people are those who do nothing at all, and have no shadow of presence for any opinion of their own goodness. The old truth in the book of Job is true now. You know in the beginning of the book of Job it is said, "The oxen were ploughing, and the asses were feeding beside them." That is generally the way in this world. The oxen are ploughing in the church—we have some who are laboring hard for Christ—and the asses are feeding beside them, on the finest livings and the fattest of the land. These are the people who have so much to say about self-righteousness. What do they do? They do not do enough to earn a living, and yet they think they are going to earn heaven. They sit down and fold their hands, and yet they are so reverently righteous, because forsooth they sometimes dole out a little in charity. They do nothing, and yet boast of self-righteousness. And with Christian people it is the same. If God makes you laborious, and keeps you constantly engaged in his service, you are less likely to be proud of our self-righteousness than

you are if you do nothing. But at all times there is a natural tendency to it. Therefore, God has written the law, that when we read it we may see our faults; that when we look into it, as into a looking-glass, we may see the impurities in our flesh, and have reason to abhor ourselves in sackcloth and ashes, and still cry to Jesus for mercy. Use the law in this fashion, and in no other.

And now, says one, "Sir, are there any here that you have been preaching at?" Yes, I like to preach at people. I do not believe it is of any avail to preach to people; preach right into them and right at them. I find in every circle a class, who say, in plain English, "Well, I am as good a father as is to be found in the parish, I am a good tradesman; I pay twenty shillings in the pound; I am no Sir John Dean Paul; I go to church, or I go to chapel, and that is more than everybody does; I pay my subscriptions—I subscribe to the infirmary; I say my prayers; therefore, I believe I stand as good a chance of heaven as anybody in the world." I do believe that three out of four of the people of London think something of that sort. Now, if that be the ground of your trust, you have a rotten hope; you have a plank to stand upon that will not bear your weight in the day of God's account. As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, "Unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." And if ye think the best performance of your hands can save you, this know, that "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Those who sought not after it have attained it. Wherefore? Because the one hath sought it by faith, the other hath sought it by the deeds of the law, where justification never was to be found. Hear, now, the gospel, men and women; down with that boasting form of your righteousness; away with your hopes, with all your trusts that spring from this—

 "Could your tears for ever flow,
 Could your zeal no respite know,
 All for sin could not atone;
 Christ must save, and save alone."

If ye would know how we must be saved, hear this—ye must come with nothing of your own to Christ. Christ has kept the law. You are to have his righteousness to be your righteousness. Christ has suffered in the stead of all who repent. His punishment is to stand instead of your being punished. And through faith in the sanctification and atonement of Christ, you are to be saved. Come, then, ye weary and heavy laden, bruised and mangled by the Fall, come then, ye sinners, come, then, ye moralists, come, then, all ye that have broken God's law and feel it, leave your own trusts and come to Jesus, he will take you in, give you a spotless robe of righteousness, and make you his for ever. "But how can I come?" says one; "Must I go home and pray?" Nay, sir, nay. Where thou art standing now, thou mayest come to the cross. Oh, if thou knowest thyself to be a sinner, now—I beseech you, ere thy foot shall leave the floor on which thou standest—now, say this—

“Myself into thy arms I cast:
Lord, save my guilty soul at last.”

Now, down with you, away with your self-righteousness. Look to me—look, now; say not, “Must I mount to heaven and bring Christ down?” “The word is nigh thee, on thy mouth and in thy heart; if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart, thou shalt be saved.” Yes, thou—thou—thou. Oh! I bless God, we have heard of hundreds who have in this place believed on Christ. Some of the blackest of the human race have come to me but even lately, and told me what God has done for them. Oh, that you, too, would now come to Jesus. Remember, he that believeth shall be saved, be his sins never so many; and he that believeth not, must perish, be his sins never so few. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would lead you to believe; so should ye escape the wrath to come? and have a place in paradise among the redeemed!

David's Dying Prayer

A Sermon

(No. 129)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 26, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.”—[Psalm 72:10](#).

THERE was a time when this prayer would have been unnecessary; a period, in fact, when it could not have been offered, seeing the thing to be asked for was already in being. A time there was when the word rebellion had not been uttered against the great magistracy of heaven; a day there was, when the slime of sin had never been left by the trail of the serpent, for no serpent then existed, and no evil spirit. There was a hour, never to be forgotten, when the seraph might have flapped his wing for aye, and never have found aught of discord, or aught of rebellion or of anarchy throughout God's universe, when the mighty angels assembled in the halls of the Most High, and without exception did reverence to their liege Lord, and paid him homage due; when the vast creation revolved around its center, the great metropolis, the throne of God, and paid its daily and hourly homage unto him, when the harmonies of creation always came to one spot and found their focus near the throne of God. There was a time when every star was bright; when all space was filled with loveliness, when holiness, purity, and happiness, were like a robe which mantled the entire creation. This world itself was once fair and lovely—so fair and lovely that we who live in these erring times can scarcely guess its beauty. It was the house of song, and the dwelling-place of praise. If it had no pre-eminence among its sister spheres, certainly it was inferior to none of them, surrounded with beauty, girt with gladness, and having in it holy and heavenly inhabitants. It was a house to which the angels themselves loved to resort, where the holy spirits, the morning stars, delighted to sing together over this beautiful and fair earth of ours. But now how changed! how different! Now it is our duty devoutly to bend our knees and pray that the whole earth may yet be filled with his glory.

In one sense this prayer is still unnecessary, for in a certain sense the whole earth is filled with God's glory. “All thy works praise thee, O God,” is as true now as it was in paradise. The stars still sing their Maker's praise; no sin hath stopped their voice, no discord hath made a jarring note among the harmonies of the spheres. The earth itself still praiseth its Maker, the exhalations, as they arise with morn, are still a pure offering, acceptable to their Maker. The lowing of the cattle, the singing of the birds, the leaping of the fishes, and the delights of animal creation, are still acceptable as votive offerings to the Most High. The mountains still bring righteousness; on their hoary summits God's holy feet might tread, for they are yet pure and spotless. Still do the green valleys, laughing with their verdure send

up their shouts to the Most High. The praise of God is sung by every wind it is howled forth in dread majesty by the voice of the tempest, the winds resound it, and the waves, with their thousand hands, clap, keeping chorus in the great march of God. The whole earth is still a great orchestra for God's praise, and his creatures still take up various parts in the eternal song, which, ever swelling and ever increasing, shall by-and-by mount to its climax in the consummation of all things. In that sense, therefore, the prayer is still inappropriate. God, who filleth all in all, and filleth earth and heaven, needeth not to have more glory, as to the essence of his glory; for still he is glorified in the whole earth.

But David intended this prayer in another sense. "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen;" not as Creator, but as a moral Governor, and a Ruler. It is as Governor that we have revolted from God and done dishonor to him; it is as our Master, our Ruler, our Judge, that we have done despite to his glory, and have trampled on his crown. It is, therefore, in this respect that David wished that the whole earth might be filled with God's glory. He desired that every idol temple might be cast down—that the name of Jehovah might be sung by every lip, that he in his person might be loved by every heart, and be for ever adored as "God over all blessed for ever." A foolish wish, say you, for it never can be accomplished. Surely the day will never come when hoary systems of superstition shall die. What! shall colossal systems of infidelity and of idolatry totter to their fall? They have resisted the battering-ram for many a year; and yet shall they pass away, and shall God's kingdom come, and his will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven? Nay, it is no day dream of a boy, it is no wish of the enthusiast. Mark who uttered that prayer, and where he was when he uttered it. It was the prayer of a dying king; it was the prayer of a holy man of God, whose eyes were just then lighted up with brightness in view of the celestial city, as he stood on the mighty Pisgah, "and viewed the landscape o'er"—the prayer of the dying psalmist, when on the margin of his life he surveyed the ocean—the prayer of a mighty king, when he saw the scroll of prophecy unfolded before him for the last time and was about to be ushered into the presence of his Maker. He uttered this as his last best wish and desire; and when he had uttered it he sank back in his bed, and said, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." It was his last prayer: "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

First, this morning, I shall try to *explain the prayer*, then I shall labor as God shall enable me, to *inflamm the hearts of all Christian men to desire the object of this prayer*; then offer a *word or two of counsel as to the pursuit of the object here spoken of*; and conclude by noticing the promise to buoy our hopes up. By-and-by "the earth shall be filled with his glory."

I. First, then, let me EXPLAIN THE PRAYER. It is a large prayer—a massive one. A prayer for a city needs a stretch of faith, ay, there are times when a prayer for one man is enough to stagger our belief; for we can scarcely think that God will hear us for even that one. But how great this prayer is, how comprehensive! "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen." It doth not exempt one single country, however trodden under

the foot of superstition; it doth not leave out one single nation, however abandoned. For the cannibal as well as for the civilised, for the man that grasps the tomahawk as well as for the man who bends his knee in supplication, this prayer is uttered, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen."

Let me just very briefly note what I believe the psalmist meant. *He desired that the true religion of God might be sent into every country.* Looking from that point of view, as we utter this prayer, what a multitude of thoughts rush into our minds! Lo, yonder we see the hoary systems of ancient superstition; we behold multitudes bowing down before Budha and Brahma, and paying their adorations to idols that are no gods: we pray for them, that they may cease to be idolaters, and that God's name may be known amongst them. Yonder we see the crescent, gleaming with a pale and sickly light, and we pray that the followers of Mahomed may bow themselves before the cross, renounce the scimitar, and return to him that loved them, casting away all the uncleanness and filthiness of their former religion. We see yonder the scarlet woman on the seven hills, and we include her in our prayer; we pray that God may cast down Rome; that he may overturn her deep, hell-rooted foundations, and may cause her tyranny over the nations to cease, that she may no more be drunk with the blood of the slain, and no more with her idolatries and witchcrafts lead the nations astray. We include her in our supplications. We look on nations that are almost too debased to be included in the roll of mankind; we see the Hottentot in his kraal, the Bushman and the Bechuana, and we put up our prayer for these: "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen." Let Africa's center, once thought to be barren but now discovered to be glorious in fertility, become fertile also in works of grace; let the regions whence our black brethren have been driven to slavery become the homes of blessedness, and the regions of God's praise. We cast our eye to other regions, where the scalp is still at the Indian's girdle, where still they wash their hands in blood and delight themselves in murder, or we look to that huge empire of China, and we see the myriads still lost in infidelity and a partial idolatry, which is consuming them and destroying them, and we pray, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." Yes, it is a great prayer, but we mean it. We are praying against Juggernaut, and against Budha, and against every form and fashion of false religion. We are crying against anti-Christ, and we are praying that the day may come when every temple shall be dismantled, when every shrine shall be left poor as poverty, and when there shall be no temple but the temple of the Lord God of Hosts, and when no song shall be sung but the song of Hallelujah; unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

But we mean more than this. We ask not merely the nominal Christianity of any country, but *the conversion of every family in every country.* "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen." Is that wish too great, too high? Are we too sanguine in our expectations? No; "The knowledge of the Lord" is to "cover the earth, as the waters cover the

sea,” and that is entirely. We do not wish to see dry places here and there, but as the deep foundations of the depths are covered with the sea, so we wish that every nation may be covered with God’s truth. And so we pray that every family may receive it; yes, we pray that every household may have its morning and its evening prayer; we pray that every family may be brought up in the fear of the Lord, that every child may, on its mother’s knee, say, “Our Father,” and that the answer may come to the infant’s prayer, “Thy kingdom come.” Yes, we ask of God that every house may be like the tents of Judah, consecrated to God; we ask that even the kraal of the Hottentot may become a synagogue for God’s praise. Our desire is, that man may become so holy, that every meal may become a eucharist, and every cup a chalice, and every garment a priestly vestment, and that all their labors may be consecrated to the Lord. We are bound to expect it, for it is said, “Even the bells upon the horses shall be holiness to the Lord, and even the pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar.”

But, we go further than that. We do not ask merely for household conversion, but for *the individual salvation of every being existing*. “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.” Should there be one heart that doth not beat in God’s praise, or one lip that is dumb in the melody of thanksgiving, then there would be yet a spot left which would not be filled with God’s praise, and that one left unconverted would blot and blur the whole great work of filling the earth with God’s glory. A missionary once said, and said truly, that if all the people in the world were converted except one man in Siberia, it would be worth while for all the Christians in England to make a pilgrimage to Siberia, if that man’s salvation could not be accomplished in any other way. And so it would. The salvation of one soul is unutterably precious, and when we offer this prayer we exclude none. We pray that the atheist, the blasphemer, the hardened rebel, the prodigate, may each be filled with God’s glory; and then we ask for mercy for the whole earth; we leave not out so much as one, but so hope and expect the day when all mankind shall bow at the Saviour’s feet, when every hand shall bring tribute, every lip a song, and every eye shall speak its gladness and its praise. This I believe to be the psalmist’s prayer—that every man might be converted, and that in fact everywhere, in every heart and conscience, God might reign without a rival, Lord paramount over the great wide world.

II. Well, now, I am going, in the second place, to try to STIR YOU UP, my brethren, to desire this great, this wonderful thing for which David prayed. Oh! for the rough and burning eloquence of the hermit of old, who stirred the nations of Europe to battle for the cross! I would to God this morning I could speak as he did when the multitude were gathered together, or, like that bishop of the church, who followed him, who addressed the mighty multitudes with such burning words of fiery eloquence, that at last they heaved to and fro with waves of excitement, and every man, starting to his feet and grasping his sword cried, “*Deus vult*,” “The Lord wills it,” and rushed forward to battle and to victory. In a higher and

holier sense I preach the crusade to-day, not as a hermit, but as God's preacher, I come forth to stir you up, men and brethren, to desire and seek after this great and highest wish of the faithful, that the whole earth might be filled with his glory. And how shall I stir you up except by leading you to one or two contemplations?

First, I beseech you, *contemplate the majesty of God*; or rather, since I am unable to help you to do that just now, let me remind you of seasons when you have in some measure grasped the thought of his divinity. Have you never at night gazed upon the starry orbs, with the thought that God was the Maker of them all until your soul was steeped in reverent adoration, and you bowed your head with wonder and with praise, and said, "Great God! how infinite art thou?" Have you never, in looking upon God's pure earth, when you have seen the mountains, and the clouds, and the rivers, and the floods, said—

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair: Thyself how wondrous then?"

Oh! methinks you must have had some glowing bursts of devotion, somewhat like that burst of Coleridge in his hymn from the valley of Chamounix or, like that of Thompson, when he leads the Seasons out to sing God's praise, or, like that matchless burst of Milton, when he extolled God, making Adam in the garden praise his Maker. Yes, there have been moments when we could bow before God, when we felt our own nothingness, and knew that he was all-in-all. Ah! if you can get such thoughts as these, my friends, this morning, I know that the next thought akin to this will be—"Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." You cannot bow before God yourself and adore him, without wishing that all the rest of mankind should do the same. Ah! and the thought has gone further; ye have wished that even inanimate objects might praise him. Oh! ye mountains, let the shaggy woods upon your crowns wave in adoration ye that with bald heads lift up yourselves loftier than those minor hills, let the clouds that gird you serve like wings of cherubim to veil your faces. But oh! adore him, adore him, for he is worthy of all adoration; let him ever be extolled. You cannot, I repeat, have great thoughts of God yourselves, without spontaneously rising up and saying, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

But, my brethren, turn your eyes yonder. What see you there? You see the Son of God stepping from the place of his glory, casting aside the garments of his majesty, and robing himself in garments of clay. Do you see him yonder? He is nailed to a cross. Oh! can ye behold him, as his head hangs meekly on his breast? Can ye catch the accents of his lips, when he says, "Father, forgive them?" Do you see him with the thorn-crown still about his brow, with bleeding head, and hands, and feet? And doth not your soul burst with adoration, when ye see him giving himself for your sins? What! can ye look upon this miracle of miracles, the death of the Son of God, without feeling reverence stirred within your bosom—a marvellous adoration that language never can express? No, I am sure you cannot. You bow

yourself before that cross, you close your eyes that are already filled with tears, and as you bend your head upon the mount of Calvary I hear you say, "Jesus, have mercy upon me." And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience, and know that he has blotted out your sins, *you are not a man* unless you start from your knees and cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen." What! did he bend his awful head down to the shades of death? What! did he hang upon a cross and bleed, and shall not earth praise him? O ye dumb, sure this might loose your tongues. O ye silent ones, ye might begin to speak; and if ye do not, sure the very stones will speak, and the rocks that rent once at his death will rend again, and open a wide mouth to let their hallelujahs ascend to heaven. Ah! the cross makes us praise him. Lovers of Jesus, can you love him without desiring that his kingdom may come? What! can ye bow before him, and yet not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out on ye, men, if ye can pretend to love your Master, and yet not desire to see him the conqueror. I give you not a doit for your piety, unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you might reach to others, and unless it prompts you to pray this prayer, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and Amen."

But gaze a moment longer. The man that died for sinners sleeps within a grave; a little while he sleeps, until the angel rolls away the stone and gives him liberty. Do you behold him, as he wakes up from his slumber, and radiant with majesty, and glorious with light, affrights his guard, and stands a risen man? Do you see him, as he climbs to heaven, as he ascends to the paradise of God, sitting at the right hand of his Father till his enemies are made his footstool? Do you see him, as principalities and powers bow before him, as cherubim and seraphim cast their crowns at his feet? Do you hear him? Do you hear him intercede, and do you hear also the music of the glorified spirits, ever chanting perpetual lays before his throne? And do you not wish that we might

"Prepare new honors for his name,
And songs before unknown?"

Oh! it is impossible to see the glorified Christ with the eye of faith, without exclaiming afterwards, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

But now one other thought. *Common humanity urges us to pray this prayer.* Did you never walk through a village full of drunkenness and profanity? Did you never see at every ale-house poor wretched bloated carcasses that once were men standing, or rather leaning against the posts staggering with drunkenness! Have you never looked into the houses of the people, and beheld them as dens of iniquity, at which your soul did turn aghast? Have you never walked through that village and seen the poverty, and degradation, and misery of the inhabitants, and sighed over it? Yes, you have. But was it ever your privilege to walk through that village in after years, when the gospel has been preached there? It has been mine. Once it was my delight to labor in a village where sin and iniquity had once been

rampant, and I can say with joy and happiness, that almost from one end of the village to the other, at the hour of eventide, you would have heard the voice of song coming from every roof-tree, echoing from every heart. Oh! what a pleasant thing to walk through the village, when drunkenness hath almost ceased, when debauchery is dead, and when men and women go forth to labor with joyful hearts, singing as they go the praises of the ever-living God, and when at sunset the humble cottager calls his children together, and reads them some portion from the book of truth, and then together they bend their knees—oh! happy, happy households! Yes, we have seen some such places, and when our hearts have been gladdened by the sight, we have said, “to the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen.” It has been our delight sometimes to tabernacle amongst the lowly for a little season. We have had our seat given us in the chimney corner for awhile, and by-and-by as the time to retire drew nigh, the good man of the house has said to the prophet’s servant, “Now, sir, will you read for us to-night, as you are here?” And we have noticed the faces of the little group around us, as we have read some portion like this—“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.” And then we have said, “No, we will not pray to-night, you must be priest in your own house, and pray yourself.” And then the good man has prayed for his children, and when we have seen them rise up and kiss their parent for the night we have thought, “Well, if this is the kind of family that religion makes, let the whole earth be filled with his glory. For the blessedness and for the happiness of man, let God’s kingdom come, and let his will be done.” Contrast that, my brethren, with the murderous rites of the Hindoo; contrast it with the savagery and barbarism of heathen lands. If I could bring some barbarian to stand before you this morning, he might himself be a better preacher than I can be, as with his almost unintelligible utterances and clicks he would begin to tell you the few ideas he had, which ideas began and ended with himself, and with the miserable prey on which he lived. You would say, “What!—there such a miserable race as this?” Let us at once kneel down and utter this prayer, and then rise up and labor to fulfill it—“Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.” I feel that I cannot stir you this morning as I wished. (If I were a Welshman I think I could move your hearts they have such a knack of waking persons up by what they say.) Oh! my soul longs for that day, it sigheth for that blessed period. Would God that all sighed and longed for it too, and were prepared to work and labor, watch and pray, until we should indeed sing with truth,

“Hallelujah! Christ the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign;
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is all-in-all.”

May such a day come, as it certainly will!

III. And now I am to give you A FEW COUNSELS IN THE PURSUIT OF THIS OBJECT.

First, *you cannot pray this prayer unless you seek in your own life to remove every impediment to the spread of Christ's kingdom.* You cannot pray it, sir; you cannot say, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen,"—you who cursed God yesterday. How can the same lip that cursed God say, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." You cannot say it, sir,—you who break his commandments, and violate his laws, and run riot against his government. If you said it you would be a vile hypocrite. Is there anything in our character and conduct which has a tendency to prevent the spread of the gospel? Oh! we say it with pain, there are many members of the churches everywhere whose characters are such that if they remain what they are, Christ's gospel never can fill the whole earth, for it cannot fill their hearts. You know the men. They call themselves God's dear people, and they would be dear if they were given away; certainly nobody would buy them at the lowest price in the world. They say that they are his precious ones, and they must be very precious, or else he never would have any thoughts of mercy towards such a set as they are. And they will sometimes say, "Ah! we are the Lord's elect," and they live in sin. They say there are very few of their sort, and we reply, "What a mercy!" If there were we should need many of our public buildings to be turned at once into gaols, to lock up such people. No, we do not believe in the characters of men who make a profession of religion and yet do not live up to it. Do not tell us about such profession, just be quiet altogether. Do not call yourselves religious, and yet act as others do. I do prefer a man that is a right down blustering sinner when he is at it. Do not let him go into sin, and then mask and cover it all up. There is no use in it. The man is not honest. I do think there is some hope of a man who is a down-right, thorough-bred sinner, that goes at it and is not ashamed of it, but a rascally, canting hypocrite, that comes crawling into our church, and yet lives in sin all the while—such a man—God Almighty may save him, but it is very seldom that he does save such people. He lets them go on, and reap the fruit of their own ways; he lets them find out, after all, that hypocrisy is a sure road to hell, and never can lead to heaven. We must look well to ourselves, by God's Spirit, or else we must not pray this prayer: "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

And there is my friend Mr. Save-all. I am sure he cannot pray this prayer, at least I think I hear him in his soul say, "O Lord, let the whole earth be filled with thy glory." A contribution is requested to assist the cause in so doing. Oh! no not at all. Like the old negro woman we have all heard of, who sang, "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel," and put her eye up in such a devout frame, that her brother negro who was passing the plate that day could not get her to pay any attention to him, till he jogged her elbow, and said, "Yes, sissy, it is well enough to sing, 'Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel;' if you would give it wings then it might, but you are just singing this and doing nothing at all." Now, what is the good of a man singing, "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel," and praying this prayer, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory," if he has got six thousand a year coming in for doing nothing at all? It is no use for

a man to put on a pair of lawn sleeves and say, "Oh, it is my devout desire that the whole earth may be filled with his glory," and then leave the world to stare at him and consider what good he is. It is no use for a man simply to have a curacy or something of that sort, buy his manuscripts cheap, come up and read off two sermons twenty minutes long, go home with a good conscience that he has done duty twice, and then say, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Why, my friends, there is no chance of it if that is the way it is to be done, not the slightest in the world; to cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory," and then stand still and do nothing at all; or merely do some nominal well-paid work, and feel it is all over. We want something in the ministry a little different before even ministers can pray this prayer in sincerity. I am not finding fault with any of my brethren, but I would recommend them to preach thirteen times a week, and then they can pray this prayer a little better. Three times a week would not do for me. It would hurt my constitution; preaching thirteen times a week is good healthy exercise. But you shut yourself up in your study, or what is ten times worse, you do nothing at all, but just take it easy all the week till the Sunday comes, and then borrow a sermon out of an old magazine, or buy one of the helps for ministers, or take down one of Charles Simeon's skeletons and preach it. My good man, you cannot pray in that fashion. The poorest Sabbath-school teacher has a better right to pray that prayer than you have. You go to a fire that is raging vehemently, and say, "Oh, let it be put out!" and stand with your hands in your pockets, while a little boy that is standing there and passing the bucket may pray that prayer sincerely, but you cannot. No, my brethren, you must be up and doing for your blaster, or else you cannot pray this prayer. You say, "I am doing my duty;" but my friend, that is not much use, you must do a little more than that, doing your duty, as you think, is often doing but a very small part of your duty. What is a man's duty? "Why, as much as he is paid for, Sir." Oh, no, I think not; a man's duty is to do whatsoever his hand findeth to do, with all his might; and until he does that he cannot with any sincerity offer this prayer, "Let the whole world be filled with his glory "Amen, and Amen." Ah, there are some here that I could mention, who by their unparalleled philanthropy, by their unique and unrivalled love of their fellow-creatures, have done much to fill the earth with God's glory; for they have let the world see what Christian men and Christian women are able to do when God's love has touched their hearts. There are to be found some who by devoting themselves to the service of their Master, and spending and being spent for him, have done much to heighten the opinion of the world towards Christianity, and make them think better of the Christian church than they would have done if it had not been for these few rare, mighty heroes in the midst of us. "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen." But it cannot be, speaking after the manner of men, unless we each of us labor and endeavor as God shall help us, to extend the kingdom of our Master.

And now, my friends, have I been urging you to an impossible toil Have I been telling Christian men to pray for that which never can be granted? Ah! no, blessed be God, we are taught to pray for nothing but that which God has been pleased to give. He has told us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his kingdom will come, and come most assuredly, too. Hark! hark! hark! I hear mustering for the battle; yonder in the dim distance I see the armies gathering; yes, I can dimly see their ensign, and behold the flag that waves before them! Who are these that come? Who are these? These are nobler and better men than we! These are warriors of Christ, as yet, perhaps, unborn. These are the mighty men, the rear-guard, these are the imperial guard of heaven, who have been fighting long. The enemy hath sometimes fled, but hitherto we have achieved but little, the phalanx of the foe standeth still fast and firm, and we have blunted our blades against the shields of the mighty. As yet the victory is not complete; the Master standeth on the hill with his reserve. Lo! I see them—they are coming, they are coming. Some of us shall live to see them—men those tongues are made of fire, whose hearts are full of flame, who speak like angels and preach like cherubim! The men are coming, and happy shall the man be that marks the triumph; each tramp of theirs shall be the tramp of victory, each blast of theirs shall level walls of spiritual Jerichos, each blow of their horn shall *clear an acre of valiant foemen*, each stroke from their sword shall cleave a dragon, and every blow from their arm shall be mighty to overturn thrones and scepters and kings! They come, they come; and till they come what shall we do?—Why fight on and hold our posts. But lo! they come. Let us be cheered with the thought that victory is certain. The hour cometh when this mighty band of heroes shall sweep the earth with the banner of victory. And when in years to come, you and I shall look upon the plain of battle, we shall see there an idol broken, there a colossal system of wickedness dashed in pieces, there a false prophet slain, there a deluder cast away. Oh! glorious shall be that day when victory shall be complete; when the horse and the rider shall be overthrown; when the battle that is without blood and without smoke, without rolling of garments of warriors, shall be completed by the shout of victory through him that hath loved us.

Beloved, we will wait awhile. We will still continue on this side with our Master; for though we are fighters now, we shall be winners by-and-by. Yes, man, woman, ye who are unknown, unnoted, but are striving for your Master, by prayer, and praise, and labor, the day is coming when everyone of you shall have a crown of victory! The hour is coming when your heart shall beat high, for you shall share the conquest, those men who are coming, without whom we cannot be made perfect, shall not have all the honor. We who have borne the brunt of the fight shall have a share of the glory; the victors shall divide the spoil, and we shall divide the spoil with them. Thou, tried, afflicted, forgotten and unknown, thou shalt soon have the palm-branch in thy hand, and thou shalt ride in triumph through the streets of earth and heaven, when thy Master shall make show of principalities and powers

openly, in the day of his victory! Only still continue, only wrestle on, and thou shalt be crowned.

But I have got one word to say, and then Amen. You know, in Roman warfare there were special rewards given for special works. There was the mural crown for the man that first scaled the rampart and stood upon the wall. I am looking on this great congregation with a thought in my mind which agitates my spirit. Young men! young men! is there not one among you that can win a mural crown? Have I not one true Christian heart here that is set for work and labor? Have not I one man that will devote himself for God and for his truth? Henry Martyn! thou art dead; and is thy mantle buried with thee? Brainerd, thou sleepest with thy fathers; and is thy spirit dead too, and shall there never be another Brainerd? Knibb, thou hast ascended to thy God; and is there nowhere another Knibb? Williams, thy martyred blood still crieth from the ground; and is there nowhere another Williams? What! not among this dense mass of young and burning spirits? Is there not one that can say in his heart, "Here am I, send me?" "Lo, this hour, by God's grace being saved, I give myself up to him, to go wherever he shall please to send me, to testify his gospel in foreign lands?" What! are there no Pauls now? Have we none who will be apostles for the Lord of hosts? I think I see one who, putting his lips together, makes this silent resolve—"By God's grace I this day devote myself to him; through trouble and through trial I will be his, if he will help me; for missionary work or for aught else I give up my all to God, and if I may die as Williams did, and wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom, I will be proud; and if I may live to serve my Master, like a Brainerd, and die at last worn out here I am, do but have me, Master, give me the honor of leading the forlorn hope of leading the vanguard of Christianity; here I am, send me." O Lord, accept that young man! Lo, I consecrate him this day in thy name for that service, these outstretched hands this morning give a benediction to you, young hero of the cross! Your brother's heart beats with you; go, and go to victory; and if it must be mine to stay here to labor in a more easy and pleasant part of the vineyard, which I dare not leave, still I will envy you, that you have the honor of going to far distant lands, and I will pray for you, that your success may be great, and that through you the kingdoms of this world may be brought to Christ, and the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth. But we will all pray this prayer in our houses alone—"Let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

You that are enemies to God, beware, beware, beware! It will be a hard thing to be found on the side of the enemy in the great battle of right.

Regeneration

A Sermon

(No. 130)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 3, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God.”—[John 3:3](#).

In daily life our thoughts are most occupied with things that are most necessary for our existence. No one murmured that the subject of the price of bread was frequently on the lips of men at a time of scarcity, because they felt that the subject was one of vital importance to the mass of the population? and therefore they murmured not, though they listened to continual declamatory speeches, and read perpetual articles in the newspapers concerning it. I must offer the same excuse, then, for bringing before you this morning the subject of regeneration. It is one of absolute and vital importance; it is the hinge of the gospel; it is the point upon which most Christians are agreed, yea, all who are Christians in sincerity and truth. It is a subject which lies at the very basis of salvation. It is the very groundwork of our hopes for heaven; and as we ought to be very careful of the basement of our structure, so should we be very diligent to take heed that we are really born again, and that we have made sure work of it for eternity. There are many who fancy they are born again who are not. It well becomes us, then, frequently to examine ourselves; and it is the minister’s duty to bring forward those subjects which lead to self-examination, and have a tendency to search the heart and try the reins of the children of men.

To proceed at once, I shall first make some remarks upon *the new birth*; secondly, I shall note *what is meant by not being able to see the kingdom of God if we are not born again*; then I shall go further on to note *why it is that “except we are born again we can not see the kingdom of God;”* and then *expostulate with men* as God’s ambassador before I close.

I. First, then, THE MATTER OF REGENERATION. In endeavoring to explain it, I must have you notice, first of all, *the figure that is employed*. It is said a man must be born again. I can not illustrate this better than by supposing a case. Suppose that in England there should be a law passed, that admission to royal courts, preference in office, and any privileges that might belong to the nation, could only be given to persons who were born in England—suppose that birth in this land was made a *sine qua non*, and it was definitely declared that whatever men might do or be, unless they were native born subjects of England they could not enter into her majesty’s presence, and could enjoy none of the emoluments or offices of the state, nor any of the privileges of citizens. I think if you suppose such a case I shall be able to illustrate the difference between any changes and reforms that men make in themselves and the real work of being born again. We will suppose, then, that some

man—a red Indian, for instance—should come to this country, and should endeavor to obtain the privileges of citizenship, well knowing that the rule is absolute and can not be altered, that a man must be a born subject, or else he can not enjoy them. Suppose he says, “*I will change my name*, I will take up the name of an Englishman; I have been called by my high-sounding title among the Sioux; I have been called the son of the Great West Wind, or some such name; but I will take an English name, I will be called a Christian man, an English subject.” Will that admit him? You see him coming to the palace gates and asking for admission. He says, “I have taken an English name.” “But are you an Englishman born and bred?” “I am not,” says he. “Then the gates must be shut against you, for the law is absolute; and though you may have the name of even the royal family itself upon you, yet because you have not been born here you must be shut out.” That illustration will apply to all of us who are here present. At least, nearly the whole of us bear the professing Christian name; living in England, you would think it a disgrace to you if you were not called Christian. You are not heathen, you are not infidel; you are neither Mohammedans nor Jews; you think that the name, Christian, is a creditable one to you, and you have taken it. Be ye quite assured that the name of a Christian is not the nature of a Christian, and that your being born in a Christian land, and being recognized as professing the Christian religion is of no avail whatever, unless there be something more added to it—the being born again as a subject of Jesus Christ.

“But,” says this red Indian, “I am prepared to *renounce my dress*, and to become an Englishman in fashion; in fact, I will go to the very top of the fashion; you shall not see me in any thing differing from the accepted style of the present day. May I not, when I am arrayed in court dress, and have decorated myself as etiquette demands, come in before her majesty? See, I’ll doff this plume, I will not shake this tomahawk, I renounce these garments. The moccasin I cast away for ever; I am an Englishman in dress, as well as name.” He comes to the gate, dressed out like one of our own countrymen; but the gates are still shut in his face, because the law required that he must be born in the country; and without that, whatever his dress might be, he could not enter the palace. So how many there are of you, who do not barely take the Christian name upon you, but have adopted Christian manners; you go to your churches, and your chapels, you attend the house of God, you take care that there is some form of religion observed in your family; your children are not left without hearing the name of Jesus! So far so good; God forbid that I should say a word against it! But remember, it is bad because you do not go further. All this is of no avail whatever for admitting you into the kingdom of heaven, unless this also is complied with—the being born again. O! dress yourselves never so grandly with the habiliments of godliness; put the chaplet of benevolence upon your brow, and gird your loins with integrity; put on your feet the shoes of perseverance, and walk through the earth an honest and upright man; yet, remember, unless you are born again, “that which is of the flesh is flesh,” and you, not having the oper-

ations of the Spirit in you, still have heaven's gates shut against you, because you are not born again.

"Well," but says the Indian, "I will not only adopt the dress, but I will *learn the language*; I will put away my brogue and my language that I once spoke, in the wild prairie or in the woods, far away from my lips. I shall not talk of the Shu-Shuh-gah, and of the strange names wherewith I have called my wild fowl and my deer, but I will speak as you speak, and act as you act; I will not only have your dress, but precisely your manners, I will talk just in the same fashion, I will adopt your brogue, I will take care that it shall be grammatically correct; will you not then admit me? I have become thoroughly Anglicized; may I not then be received?" "No," says the keeper of the door, "there is no admittance, for except a man be born in this country, he can not be admitted." So with some of you; you talk just like Christians. Perhaps you have a little too much cant about you; you have begun so strictly to imitate what you think to be a godly man, that you go a little beyond the mark, and you gloss it so much that we are able to detect the counterfeit. Still you pass current among most men as being a right down sort of Christian man. You have studied biographies, and sometimes you tell long yarns about divine experience; you have borrowed them from the biographies of good men; you have been with Christians, and know how to talk as they do; you have caught a puritanical twang, perhaps; you go through the world just like professors; and if you were to be observed, no one would detect you. You are a member of the church; you have been baptized; you take the Lord's Supper; perhaps you are a deacon, or an elder; you pass the sacramental cup round; you are just all that a Christian can be, except that you are without a Christian heart. You are whitewashed sepulchres, still full of rottenness within, though garnished fairly on the outside. Well, take heed, take heed! It is an astonishing thing, how near the painter can go to the expression of life, and yet the canvas is dead and motionless; and it is equally astonishing how near a man may go to a Christian, and yet, through not being born again, the absolute rule shuts him out of heaven, and with all his profession, with all the trappings of his professed godliness, and with all the gorgeous plumes of experience, yet must he be borne away from heaven's gates.

You are uncharitable Mr. Spurgeon. I do not care what you say about that, I never wish to be more charitable than Christ. I did not say this; Christ said it. If you have any quarrel with him, settle it there; I am not the maker of this truth, but simply the speaker of it. I find it written, "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." If your footman should go to the door, and deliver your message correctly, the man at the door might abuse him never so much, but the footman would say, "Sir, do not abuse me, I can not help it; I can only tell you what my master told me. I am not the originator of it." So if you think me uncharitable, remember you do not accuse me, you accuse Christ; you are not finding fault with the messenger, you are finding fault with the message; Christ has said it—"Except a man be born again." I can not dispute with you, and shall not try. That is simply God's

Word. Reject it at your peril. Believe it and receive it, I entreat you, because it comes from the lips of the Most High.

But now note *the manner in which this regeneration is obtained*. I think I have none here so profoundly stupid as to be Puseyites I can scarcely believe that I have been the means of attracting one person here, so utterly devoid of every remnant of brain, as to believe the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Yet I must just hint at it. There be some who teach that by a few drops of water sprinkled on an infant's brow the infant becomes regenerate. Well, granted. And now I will find out your regenerate ones twenty years afterward. The champion of the prize ring is a regenerated man. O! yes, he was regenerated, because in infancy he was baptized; and, therefore, if all infants in baptism are regenerated, the prize-fighter is a regenerated man. Take hold of him and receive him as your brother in the Lord. Do you hear that man swearing and blaspheming God? He is regenerate; believe me, he is regenerate; the priest put a few drops of water on his brow, and he is a regenerated man. Do you see the drunkard reeling down the street, the pest of the neighborhood, fighting every body, and beating his wife, worse than the brute. Well, he is regenerate, he is one of those Puseyite's regenerates—O! goodly regenerate! Mark you the crowd assembled in the streets! The gallows is erected, Palmer is about to be executed; the man whose name should be execrated through all eternity for his villainy! Here is one of the Puseyite's regenerates. Yes, he is regenerate because he was baptized in infancy; regenerate, while he mixes his strychnine; regenerate while he administers his poison slowly, that he may cause death, and infinite pain, all the while he is causing it. Regenerate, forsooth! If that be regeneration, such regeneration is not worth having; if that be the thing that makes us free of the kingdom of heaven, verily, the gospel is indeed a licentious gospel; we can say nothing about it. If that be the gospel, that all such men are regenerate and will be saved, we can only say, that it would be the duty of every man in the world to move that gospel right away, because it is so inconsistent with the commonest principles of morality, that it could not possibly be of God, but of the devil.

But some say all are regenerate when they are baptized. Well, if you think so, stick to your own thoughts; I can not help it. Simon Magus was certainly one exception; he was baptized on a profession of his faith; but so far from being regenerated by his baptism, we find Paul saying, "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." And yet he was one of those regenerates, because he had been baptized. Ah! that doctrine only needs to be stated to sensible men, and they will at once reject it. Gentlemen that are fond of a filigree religion, and like ornament and show; gentlemen of the high Beau Brummel school will very likely prefer this religion, because they have cultivated their taste at the expense of their brain, and have forgotten that what is consistent with the sound judgment of a man can not be consistent with the Word of God. So much for the first point.

Neither is a man regenerated, we say, in the next place, *by his own exertions*. A man may reform himself very much, and that is well and good; let all do that. A man may cast away

many vices, forsake many lusts in which he indulged, and conquer evil habits; but no man in the world can make himself to be born in God; though he should struggle never so much, he could never accomplish what is beyond his power. And, mark you, if he could make himself to be born again still he would not enter heaven, because there is another point in the condition which he would have violated—"unless a man be born of the *Spirit*, he can not see the kingdom of God." So that the best exertions of the flesh do not reach this high point, the being born again of the Spirit of God.

And now we must say, that regeneration consists in this. God the Holy Spirit, in a supernatural manner—mark, by the word supernatural I mean just what it strictly means; supernatural, more than natural—works upon the hearts of men, and they by the operations of the divine Spirit become regenerate men; but without the Spirit they never can be regenerated. And unless God the Holy Spirit, who "worketh in us to will and to do," should operate upon the will and the conscience, regeneration is an absolute impossibility, and therefore so is salvation. "What!" says one, "do you mean to say that God absolutely interposes in the salvation of every man to make him regenerate?" I do indeed; in the salvation of every person there is an actual putting forth of the divine power, whereby the dead sinner is quickened, the unwilling sinner is made willing, the desperately hard sinner has his conscience made tender; and he who rejected God and despised Christ, is brought to cast himself down at the feet of Jesus. This is called fanatical doctrine, mayhap; that we can not help; it is scriptural doctrine, that is enough for us. "Except a man be born of the Spirit he can not see the kingdom of God; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." If you like it not, quarrel with my Master, not with me; I do but simply declare his own revelation, that there must be in your heart something more than you can ever work there. There must be a divine operation; call it a miraculous operation, if you please; it is in some sense so. There must be a divine interposition, a divine working, a divine influence, or else, do what you may, without that you perish, and are undone; "for except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." The change is radical; it gives us new natures, makes us love what we hated and hate what we loved, sets us in a new road; makes our habits different, our thoughts different, makes us different in private, and different in public. So that being in Christ it is fulfilled: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

II. And, now I must come to the second point. I trust I have explained regeneration, so that all may see what it is. Now, WHAT DOES THE EXPRESSION, "SEEING THE KINGDOM OF GOD," MEAN? It means two things. To see the kingdom of God on earth is to be a member of the mystical church—it is to enjoy the liberty and privileges of the child of God. To see the kingdom of heaven means to have power in prayer, to have communion with Christ, to have fellowship with the Holy Ghost; and to bring forth and produce all those joyous and blessed fruits which are the effect of regeneration. In a higher sense, "to

see the kingdom of God,” means to be admitted into heaven. Except a man be born again, he can not know about heavenly things on earth, and he can not enjoy heavenly blessings for ever—“he can not see the kingdom of God.”

III. I think I may just pass over the second point without remark, and proceed to notice, in the third place, WHY IT IS THAT “UNLESS A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CAN NOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.” And I will confine my remarks to the kingdom of God in the world to come.

Why, he cannot see the kingdom of God, because *he would be out of place in heaven*. A man that is not born again could not enjoy heaven. There is an actual impossibility in his nature, which prevents him from enjoying any of the bliss of Paradise. You think, mayhap, that heaven consists in those walls of jewels, in those pearly gates, and gates of gold; not so, that is the habitation of heaven. Heaven dwells there, but that is not heaven. Heaven is a state that is made here, that is made in the heart; made by God’s Spirit within us, and unless God the Spirit has renewed us, and caused us to be born again, we can not enjoy the things of heaven. Why, it is a physical impossibility that ever a swine should deliver a lecture on astronomy; every man will clearly perceive that it must be impossible that a snail should build a city; and there is just as much impossibility that a sinner unmeddled, should enjoy heaven. Why, there would be nothing there for him to enjoy; if he could be put into the place where heaven is, he would be miserable; he would cry, “Let me away, let me away; let me away from this miserable place!” I appeal to yourselves; a sermon is too long for you very often; the singing of God’s praises is dull, dry work; you think that going up to God’s house is very tedious. What will you do where they praise God day without night? If just a short discourse here is very wearying, what will you think of the eternal talkings of the redeemed through all ages of the wonders of redeeming love? If the company of the righteous is very irksome to you, what will be their company throughout eternity? I think many of you are free to confess that psalm singing is not a bit to your taste, that you care naught about any spiritual things; give you your bottle of wine, and set you down at your ease, that is heaven for you! Well, there is no such a heaven yet made; and therefore there is no heaven for you. The only heaven there is, is the heaven of spiritual men, the heaven of praise, the heaven of delight in God, the heaven of acceptance in the beloved, the heaven of communion with Christ. Now, you do not understand any thing about this; you could not enjoy it if you were to have it; you have not the capabilities for doing so. You, yourselves, from the very fact of your not being born again, are your own barrier to heaven, and if God were to open the gate wide, and say, “Come in,” you could not enjoy heaven, if you were admitted; for unless a man be born again, there is an impossibility, a moral impossibility, of his seeing the kingdom of God. Suppose there are some persons here who are entirely deaf, who have never heard sounds; well, I say they can not hear singing. Do I when I say it, say a cruel thing? It is their own disability that prevents them. So when God says you can not see the kingdom

of heaven, he means that it is your own disability for the enjoyment of heaven, that will prevent you ever entering there.

But there are some other reasons; there are reasons why

“Those holy gates for ever bar

Pollution, sin, and shame.”

There are reasons, besides those in yourselves, why you can not see the kingdom of God, unless you are born again. *Ask yon spirits* before the throne: “Angels, principalities and powers, would ye be willing that men who love not God, who believe not in Christ, who have not been born again, should dwell here?” I see them, as they look down upon us, and hear them answering, “No! Once we fought the dragon and expelled him because he tempted us to sin; we must not and we will not, have the wicked here. These alabaster walls must not be soiled with black and lustful fingers; the white pavement of heaven must not be stained and rendered filthy by the unholy feet of ungodly men. No!” I see a thousand spears bristling, and the fiery faces of a myriad seraphs thrust over the walls of Paradise. “No, while these arms have strength, and these wings have power, no sin shall ever enter here.” I address myself moreover to the saints in heaven, redeemed by sovereign grace: “Children of God, are ye willing that the wicked should enter heaven as they are, without being born again? Ye love men, say, say, say, are ye willing that they should be admitted as they are?” I see Lot rise up, and he cries, “Admit them into heaven! No! What! must I be vexed with the conversation of Sodomites again, as once I was?” I see Abraham; and he comes forward, and he says, “No; I can not have them here. I had enough of them while I was with them on earth—their jests and jeers, their silly talkings, their vain conversation, vexed and grieved us. We want them not here.” And, heavenly though they be, and loving as their spirits are, yet there is not a saint in heaven who would not resent with the utmost indignation the approach of any one of you to the gates of paradise, if you are still unholy, and have not been born again.

But all that were nothing. We might perhaps scale the ramparts of heaven, if they were only protected by angels, and burst the gates of paradise open, if only the saints defended them. But there is another reason than that—*God has said it himself*—“Except a man be born again, he not see the kingdom of God.” What sinner, wilt thou scale the battlements of paradise when God is ready to thrust thee down to hell? Wilt thou with impudent face brazen him out? God has said it, God hath said it, with a voice of thunder, “Ye shall not see the kingdom of heaven.” Can ye wrestle with the Almighty? Can ye overthrow Omnipotence? Can ye grapple with the Most High? Worm of the dust! canst thou overcome thy Maker? Trembling insect of an hour, shaken by the lightnings when far overhead they flash far athwart the sky, wilt thou dare the hand of? Wilt thou venture to defy him to his face? Ah! he would laugh at thee. As the snow melteth before the sun, as wax runneth at the fierceness of the fire, so wouldst thou, if his fury should once lay hold of thee. Think not that thou

canst overcome him. He has sealed the gate of Paradise against thee, and there is no entrance. The God of justice says, "I will not reward the wicked with the righteous; I will not suffer my goodly, godly Paradise to be stained by wicked ungodly men. If they turn I will have mercy upon them; but if they turn not, as I live, I will rend them in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver." Now, sinner, canst thou brazen it out against him! Wilt thou rush upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's bucklers? Wilt thou try to scale his heaven when his arrow is strung upon the bow to reach thine heart? What! when the glittering sword is at thy neck and ready to slay thee? Wilt thou endeavor to strive against thy Maker? No potsherd, no; contend with thy fellow potsherd. Go, crawling grasshopper; go, fight with thy brothers; strive with them, but come not against the Almighty. He hath said it, and you never shall, you never shall enter heaven, unless you are born again. Again, I say, quarrel not with me; I have but delivered my Master's message. Take it, disbelieve it if you dare; but if you disbelieve it, rail not at me, for it is God's message, and I speak in love to your soul lest, lacking it, you should perish in the dark, and walk blindfold to your everlasting perdition.

IV. Now, my friends, A LITTLE EXPOSTULATION WITH YOU, and then farewell. I hear one man say, "Well, well, well, I see it. *I will hope that I shall be born again after I am dead.*" O, sir, believe me, you will be a miserable fool for your pains. When men die their state is fixed.

"Fixed as their everlasting state,
Could they repent, 'tis now too late."

Our life is like that wax melting in the flame; death puts its stamp on it, and then it cools, and the impress never can be changed. You to-day are like the burning metal running forth from the cauldron in the mold; death cools you in your mold, and you are cast in that shape throughout eternity. The voice of doom crieth over the dead, "He that is holy let him be holy still; he that is unjust let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." The damned are lost forever; they can not be born again; they go on cursing, ever being cursed; ever fighting against God, and ever being trampled beneath his feet; they go on ever mocking, ever being laughed at for their mockery; ever rebelling and ever being tortured with the whips of conscience, because they are ever sinning. They can not be regenerated because they are dead.

"Well", says another, "*I will take care that I am regenerated first before I die.*" Sir, I repeat again, thou art a fool in talking thus; how knowest thou that thou shalt live? Hast thou taken a lease of thy life, as thou bast of thy house? Canst thou insure the breath within thy nostrils? Canst thou say in certainty that another ray of light shall ever reach thine eye? Canst thou be sure that, as thine heart is beating a funeral march to the grave, thou wilt not soon beat the last note; and so thou shalt die where thou standest or sittest now? O, man! if thy bones were iron, and thy sinews brass, and thy lungs steel, then mightest thou say, "I shall live." But thou art made of dust; thou art like the flower of the field; thou mayest die now. Lo! I

see death standing yonder, moving to and fro the stone of time upon his scythe, to sharpen it; to-day, to-day, for some of you he grasps the scythe—and away, away, he mows the fields, and you fall one by one. You must not, and you can not live. God carries us away as a flood, like a ship in a Whirlpool; like the log in a current, dashed onward to the cataract. There is no stopping any one of us; we are all dying now! and yet you say you will be regenerated ere you die! Ay sirs, but are you regenerated now? For if not, it may be too late to hope for to-morrow. To-morrow you may be in hell, sealed up for ever by adamant destiny, which never can be moved.

“Well,” cries another, “*I do not care much about it*; for I see very little in being shut out of Paradise.” Ah, sir, it is because thou dost not understand it. Thou smilest at it now; but there will be a day when thy conscience will be tender, when thy memory will be strong, when thy judgment will be enlightened, and when thou wilt think very differently from what thou dost now. Sinners in hell are not the fools they are on earth ; in hell they do not laugh at everlasting burnings; in the pit they do not despise the words “eternal fire.” The worm that never dieth, when it is gnawing, gnaws out all joke and laughter; you may despise God now, and despise me now, for what I say, but death will change your note. O, my hearers, if that were all, I would be willing. You may despise me, yes, you may; but O! I beseech you, do not despise yourselves; O! be not so fool-hardy as to go whistling to hell, and laughing to the pit; for when you are there, sirs, you will find it a different thing from what you dream it to be now. When you see the gates of Paradise shut against you, you will find it to be a more important matter than you judge of now. You came to hear me preach to-day, as you would have gone to the opera or playhouse; you thought I should amuse you. Ah! that is not my aim, God is my witness, I came here solemnly in earnest, to wash my hands of your blood. If you are damned, any one of you, it shall not be because I did not warn you. Men and women, if ye perish, my hands are washed in innocence; I have told you of your doom. I again cry, repent, repent, repent, for “unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” I came here determined this morning, if I must use rough words, to use them; to speak right on against men, and for men too; for the things we say against you now are really for your good. We do but warn you, lest you perish. But ah! I hear one of you saying, “I do not understand this mystery; pray explain it to me.” Fool, fool, that thou art; do you see that fire ? We are startled up from our beds, the light is at the window; we rush down stairs; people are hurrying to and fro; the street is trampled thick with crowds: they are rushing toward the house, which is in a burst of flame. The firemen are at their work; a stream of water is pouring upon the house; but hark ye! hark ye! there is a man up stairs; there is a man in the top room; there is just time for him to escape, and barely. A shout is raised—“Aho! fire! fire! fire! aho!”—but the man does not make his appearance at the window. See, the ladder is placed against the walls; it is up to the window sill—a strong hand dashes in the casement! What is the man after, all the while? What! is he tied down in his bed? Is he a

cripple? Has some fiend got hold of him, and nailed him to the floor? No, no, no; he feels the boards getting hot beneath his feet, the smoke is stifling him, the flame is burning all around, he knows there is but one way of escape, by that ladder! What is he doing? He is sitting down—no, you can not believe me—he is sitting down and saying, “The origin of this fire is very mysterious; I wonder how it is to be discovered; how shall we understand it?” Why, you laugh at him! You are laughing at yourselves. You are seeking to have this question and that question answered, when your soul is in peril of eternal life! O! when you are saved, it will be time then to ask questions; but while you are now in the burning house, and in danger of destruction, it is not your time to be puzzling yourselves about free will, fixed fate, predestination absolute. All these questions are good and well enough afterward for those that are saved. Let the man on shore try to find out the cause of the storm; your only business now is to ask, “What must I do to be saved? And how can I escape from the great damnation that awaiteth me?”

But ah! my friends, I can not speak as I wish. I think I feel, this morning, something like Dante, when he wrote his *“Il Inferno.”* Men said of him that he had been in hell; he looked like it. He had thought of it so long, that they said, “He has been in hell,” he spoke with such an awful earnestness. Ah! I if I could, I would speak like that too. It is only a few days more, and I shall meet you face to face; I can look over the lapse of a few years, when you and I shall stand face to face before God’s bar. “Watchman, watchman,” saith a voice, “didst thou warn them? didst thou warn them?” Will any of you then say I did not? No, even the most abandoned of you will, at that day, say, “We laughed, we scoffed at it, we cared not for it; but, O Lord, we are obliged to speak the truth; the man was in earnest about it; he told us of our doom, and he is clear.” Will you say so? I know you will.

But yet this one remark—to be cast out of heaven is an awful thing. Some of you have parents there; you have dear friends there; they grasped your hand in death, and said, “Farewell until we meet you.” But if you never see the kingdom of God, you can never see them again. “My mother,” says one, “sleeps in the graveyard; I often go to the tomb and put some flowers upon it, in remembrance of her who nursed me; but must I never see her again?” No, never again; no, never, unless you are born again. Mothers, you have had infants that have gone to heaven; you would like to see your family all around the throne; but you will never see your children more, unless you are born again. Will you bid adieu this day to the immortal? Will you say farewell this hour to your glorified friends in Paradise? You must say so, or else be converted. You must fly to Christ, and trust in him, and his Spirit must renew you, or else you must look up to heaven, and say, “Choir of the blest! I shall never hear you sing; parents of my youth, guardians of my infancy, I love you, but between you and myself there is a great gulf fixed; I am cast away, and you are saved.” O, I beseech you, think on these matters; and when you go away, let it not be to forget what I have said. If you are at all impressed this morning, put not away the impression; it may be your last

warning; it will be a sorrowful thing to be lost with the notes of the gospel in your ears, and to perish under the ministry of truth.

Salvation of the Lord

A Sermon

(No. 131)

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 for ever. 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, 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 never could have known. He shall best meet the wants of God’s people as a preacher who has had those wants 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, when, 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 endureth for ever. 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 shall close up by showing you *the counterpart of the doctrine*. Seeing every truth hath its obverse, so hath 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 day-star flung its ray across the darkness, when as yet the un navigated 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 he foresaw 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 digged the deeps of love, that out of them there might well up springs of salvation? Who aided him?" None. He himself, alone, did it. In fact, if angels had then been in existence, they could not have assisted God; for I can well suppose that if a solemn conclave of those spirits had been held, if God had put to them this question, "Man will rebel; I declare I will punish; 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 those 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 the 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 afterward 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 bath 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 mingled 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 beside. He bath done it wholly Atonement is the unaided work of Jesus. On yonder cross I see the man who "trode 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—hath 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 must 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 every thing was provided for his escape; his followers had means at the bottom of the wall to enable him to fly across the country, and on the coast they had their boats lying ready to take him to another land; in fact every thing 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, so 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 afterward he will do the rest for him, then verily, my friends, we are not so much obliged to God as we had thought for; 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 with it two thousand miles; whereupon, said a wit, “So far as the two thousand 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 does require of the sinner—dead in sin—that he should take the first step, then he requireth just that which renders salvation as impossible under the gospel as ever it was under the law, seeing 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 lieth 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 afterward; but unless the first thing be done for him, he must perish 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 any thing whatever of man which he himself had not also engaged to furnish. For how many have I frequently hanging upon my lips of the worst of characters—men whose lives have become so horribly bad, that the lip 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 should 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 can not 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 shall not. But if men did so I could not help it; my business, as I have often said in this place before, 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 tell the Master's message; if you do not like the message, quarrel with the Bible, not with me; so long as I have Scripture on my side I will dare and defy you to do any thing 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 just 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 spoilt the whole of salvation; you have just taken the key-stone out of the arch, and down it tumbles. There is nothing left then.

And now on the next point we shall a little disagree again, "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 for ever, 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 should 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, hath 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 standeth 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;

O 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. “O!” he says, “what a host of troubles I have coming—how shall I meet them all? O! that I had grace enough to bear me through them all! “My dear friends, you will have grace enough for your troubles, as they come one by one. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be;” but thy strength shall never be as thy months, or as thy weeks. Thou shalt have thy strength as thou hast thy bread. “Give us this day our daily bread.” Give us this day our daily grace. But why is it you will be troubling yourself about the things of to-morrow? 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 thee than thou needest. “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 been soon devoured, and his handfull would have been melted like a drop of dew in the sea. Stand in the narrow pass of to-day, and fight thy troubles one by one; but do not rush into the plains of tomorrow, for there thou wilt 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 to be clouded again by sorrow; their hearts that tremble now are to be made joyous and fast, and set for ever 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 for ever. 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 top-most 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 even sung it here below. In heaven, when grace shall have done its work, this truth shall stand out in blazing letters of gold, "Salvation is of the Lord."

II. Thus I have tried to expound the gospel. Now shall I show you How GOD HAS HEDGED THIS GOSPEL ABOUT.

Some have said salvation in some cases is the result of *natural temperament*. Well, Sir, well; 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 these 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 any thing to do with it, we should 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 what with a fierce high spirit that could brook neither bit nor bridle, what with perpetual rebellions and ebullitions of hot anger, she said, "My son, my son, what wilt thou be in thy riper years? Surely thou wilt dash in pieces law and order, and be a disgrace to thy father's name." He grew up; in youth he was wild and wanton, but, wonder of wonders, on 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, 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 tear 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, in prayer alone. And what is he now? He has just this very morning come from sin; he has become the debauched desperate villain, 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 only his own 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 fellow has had his heart broken, and been led to weep, and has cried to God for mercy, and renounced his vile sin; whilst some fair maiden by his side hath 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 just 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 some time 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,” said he, “I can not say much about them.” “How many out of those two hundred whom you received in a year ago stand fast?” “Well,” he said, “I am afraid not many of them; we have turned seventy 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, any one else might unconvert you; what any man can do another man can undo; it is only what God does that is abiding.

No, my brethren; 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 so 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 every body; 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 aught else. This 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 hath but 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-bye 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 recollect, in all times of popularity, that “Crucify him; crucify him” follows fast upon the heels of “Hosanna,” and that the crowd to-day, if dealt faithfully with, may turn into the handful of to-morrow; 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 I have 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-nigh broken; till at last I learned the art of bearing all and caring for none. And how my grief runneth 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 laughingstock 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-nigh impenetrable castle into which he has fled. There is the outer moat; there is a second moat; there are the high walls; and then afterward there is the dungeon and keep, 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 cummin;' a good respectable gentleman 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 be of the Lord, how can it be of good works? But when that is done, he has a second intrenchment—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 next 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 you, 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? O no; the sinner has retired to the keep, in the center of the castle; and now he changes his tactics. "I can not save myself," says he, "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 can not save yourself. This sword, you see, cuts two ways; it cut pride down, and then it cleaves the skull of despair. If any man say he can save himself, it halveth his pride at once; and if another man say he can not be saved, it dasheth 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 divinity. *I will defy you to be heterodox* if you believe this truth. 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 can not be; you will cast every thing 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 keepeth 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 upward 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 bell; come on demons of the pit!

“He that has helped me bears me through,
And makes me more than conqueror too.”

Salvation resteth not on this poor arm, else should I despair, but on the arm of yon 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 ever will spread without a few stones? But they would 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 future; for after that the people 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 constabulary. 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 brethren 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 on. 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. O! for such a man to dare the mob, and then the mob would not need to be dared. Let us go there, recollecting 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 for ever; 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 lip could summon. O! to let men know this, that their salvation is of God! Swearer, swear not against him in whose hand thy breath is! Despiser, despise not him who can save you or destroy you. And thou hypocrite, seek not to deceive him from whom salvation comes, and who therefore knows right well whether thy salvation come from him.

IV. And now in concluding, let me just tell you WHAT IS THE OBSERVE 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 for ever in perdition, and reflect, "I have destroyed myself; I have made a suicide of my soul; I have been my own destroyer; 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 ye, turn ye, why will ye 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 stairs, I was struck with a memorable sentence, uttered by one who stood there. He said, "There are 9000 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 can not, O may God have mercy on me, for his name's sake! But now remember! Ye have souls; those souls will be damned, or saved. Which will it be ? Damned they must be for ever, unless God shall save you; unless Christ shall have mercy upon you, there is no hope for you. Down on your knees I 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. Or ever the next drop of blood shall run through your veins, may you find peace! Remember, that peace is to be had now. If you feel now 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 ye 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 despised my promised rest
 Shall have no portion there."

 O! that ye may not be despisers, lest ye "wonder and perish!" May ye now fly to Christ, and be accepted in the beloved. It is my last best prayer. May the Lord hear it. Amen.

Christ—The Power and Wisdom of God

A Sermon

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REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”—1 Corinthians 1:24.

UNBELIEF toward the gospel of Christ is the most unreasonable thing in all the world, because the reason which the unbeliever gives for his unbelief is fairly met by the character and constitution of the gospel of Christ. Notice that before this verse we read—“The Jews required a sign, the Greeks seek after wisdom.” If you met the Jew who believed not on Christ in the apostle’s day, he said, “I can not believe, because I want a sign;” and if you met the Greek, he said, “I can not believe, because I want a philosophic system, one that is full of wisdom.” “Now,” says the apostle, “both these objections are untenable and unreasonable. If you suppose that the Jew requires a sign, that sign is given him: Christ is the power of God. The miracles that Christ wrought upon earth were signs more than sufficiently abundant; and if the Jewish people had but the will to believe, they would have found abundant signs and reasons for believing in the personal acts of Christ and his apostles.” And let the Greeks say, “I can not believe, because I require a wise system: O Greek, Christ is the wisdom of God. If thou wouldst but investigate the subject, thou wouldst find in it profoundness of wisdom—a depth where the most gigantic intellect might be drowned. It is no shallow gospel, but a deep, and a great deep too, a deep which passeth understanding. Thine objection is ill-founded; for Christ is the wisdom of God, and his gospel is the highest of all sciences. If thou wishest to find wisdom, thou must find it in the word of revelation.”

Now, this morning, we shall try to bring out these two thoughts of the gospel; and it may be that God shall bless what we shall say to the removing of the objection of either Jew or Greek; that the one requiring a sign may see it in the *power* of God in Christ, and that he who requireth wisdom may behold it in the *wisdom* of God in Christ. We shall understand our text in a threefold manner: Christ, that is, *Christ personally*, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God;” Christ, that is, *Christ’s gospel*, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God;” Christ, that is, *Christ in the heart—true religion*, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

I. First, to begin, then, with CHRIST PERSONALLY. Christ considered as God and man, the Son of God equal with his Father, and yet the man, born of the Virgin Mary. Christ, in his complex person, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” *He is the power of God from all eternity*. “By his word were the heavens made, and all the host of them.” “The Word was God, and the Word was with God.” “All things were made by him, and without

him was not any thing made that was made.” The pillars of the earth were placed in their everlasting sockets by the omnipotent right hand of Christ; the curtains of the heavens were drawn upon their rings of starry light by him who was from everlasting the All-glorious Son of God. The orbs that float aloft in ether, those ponderous planets, and those mighty stars, were placed in their positions or sent rolling through space by the eternal strength of him who is “the first and the last.” “the Prince of the kings of the earth.” Christ is the power of God, for he is the Creator of all things, and by him all things exist.

But *when he came to earth*, took upon himself the fashion of a man, tabernacled in the inn, and slept in the manger, he still gave proof that he was the Son of God; not so much so when, as an infant of a span long, the immortal was the mortal and the infinite became a babe; not so much so in his youth, but afterward when he began his public ministry, he gave abundant proofs of his power and Godhead. The winds hushed by his finger uplifted, the waves calmed by his voice, so that they became solid as marble beneath his tread; the tempest, cowering at his feet, as before a conqueror whom it knew and obeyed; these things, these stormy elements, the wind, the tempest, and the water, gave full proof of his abundant power. The lame man leaping, the deaf man hearing, the dumb man singing, the dead rising, these, again, were proofs that he was, the “power of God.” When the voice of Jesus startled the shades of Hades, and rent the bonds of death, with “Lazarus, come forth!” and when the carcass rotten in the tomb woke up to life, there was proof of his divine power and Godhead. A thousand other proofs he afforded; but we need not stay to mention them to you who have Bibles in your houses, and who can read them every day. At last he yielded up his life, and was buried in the tomb. Not long, however, did he sleep; for he gave another proof of his divine power and Godhead, when starting from his slumber, he affrighted the guards with the majesty of his grandeur, not being holden by the bonds of death, they being like green withes before our conquering Samson, who had meanwhile pulled up the gates of hell, and carried them on his shoulders far away.

That he is the *power* of God *now*, Scripture very positively affirmeth; for it is written, “he sitteth at the right hand of God.” He hath the reins of Providence gathered in his hands; the fleet coursers of Time are driven by him who sits in the chariot of the world, and bids its wheels run round; and he shall bid them stay when it shall please him. He is the great umpire of all disputes, the great Sovereign Head of the church, the Lord of heaven, and death, and hell; and by-and-by we shall know that he shall come,

“On fiery clouds and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind;”

and then the quickened dead, the startled myriads, the divided firmaments, the “Depart, ye cursed,” and the “Come, ye blessed,” shall proclaim him to be the power of God, who hath power over all flesh, to save or to condemn, as it pleaseth him.

But he is equally “the *wisdom* of God.” The great things that he did *before all worlds* were proofs of his wisdom. He planned the way of salvation; he devised the system of atonement and substitution; he laid the foundations of the great plan of salvation. There was wisdom. But he built the heavens by wisdom, and he laid the pillars of light, whereon the firmament is balanced, by his skill and wisdom. Mark the world; and learn, as ye see all its multitudinous proofs of the wisdom of God, and there you have the wisdom of Christ; for he was the creator of it. And *when he became a man*, he gave proofs enough of wisdom. Even in childhood, when he made the doctors sit abashed by the questions that he asked, he showed that he was more than mortal. And when the Pharisee and Sadducee and Herodian were all at last defeated, and their nets were broken, he proved again the superlative wisdom of the Son of God. And when those who came to take him, stood enchained by his eloquence, spell-bound by his marvelous oratory, there was again a proof that he was the wisdom of God, who could so enchain the minds of men. And now that he intercedeth before the throne of God, now that he is our Advocate before the throne, the pledge and surety for the blessed, now that the reins of government are in his hands, and are ever wisely directed, we have abundant proofs that the wisdom of God is in Christ, as well as the power of God. Bow before him, ye that love him; bow before him, ye that desire him! Crown him, crown him, crown him! He is worthy of it, unto him is everlasting might; unto him is unswerving wisdom: bless his name; exalt him; clap your wings, ye seraphs; cry aloud, ye cherubim; shout, shout, shout, to his praise, ye ransomed host above. And ye, O men that know his grace, extol him in your songs for ever; for he is Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

II. But now Christ, that is, CHRIST’S GOSPEL, is the power and the wisdom of God.

1. Christ’s gospel is *a thing of divine power*. Do you want proofs of it? Ye shall not go far. How could Christ’s gospel have been established in this world as it was, if it had not in itself intrinsic might? By whom was it spread? By mitred prelates, by learned doctors, by fierce warriors, by caliphs, by prophets? No; by fishermen, untaught, unlettered; save as the Spirit gave them utterance, not knowing how to preach or speak. How did they spread it? By the bayonet, by their swords, by the keen metal of their blades? Did they drive their gospel into men at the point of the lance, and with the cimeter? Say, did myriads rush to battle, as they did when they followed the crescent of Mohammed, and did they convert men by force, by law, by might? Ah I no. Nothing but their simple words, their unvarnished eloquence, their rough declamation, their unhewn oratory; these it was, which, by the blessing of God’s Spirit, carried the gospel round the world within a century after the death of its founder.

But what was this gospel which achieved so much? Was it a thing palatable to human nature? Did it offer a paradise of present happiness? Did it offer delight to the flesh and to the senses? Did it give charming prospects of wealth? Did it give licentious ideas to men?

No; it was a gospel of morality most strict, it was a gospel with delights entirely spiritual—a gospel which abjured the flesh, which, unlike the coarse delusion of Joe Smith, cut off every prospect from men of delighting themselves with the joys of lust. It was a gospel holy, spotless, clean as the breath of heaven; it was pure as the wing of angel; not like that which spread of old, in the days of Mohammed, a gospel of lust, of vice, and wickedness, but pure, and consequently not palatable to human nature. And yet it spread. Why? My friends, I think the only answer I can give you is, because it has in it the power of God.

But do you want another proof? How has it been maintained since then? No easy path has the gospel had. The good bark of the church has had to plow her way through seas of blood, and those who have manned her have been bespattered with the bloody spray; yea, they have had to man her and keep her in motion, by laying down their lives unto the death. Mark the bitter persecution of the church of Christ from the time of Nero to the days of Mary, and further on, through the days of Charles the Second, and of those kings of unhappy memory, who had not as yet learned how to spell “toleration.” From the dragoons of Claverhouse, right straight away to the gladiatorial shows of Rome, what a long series of persecutions has the gospel had! But, as the old divines used to say, “The blood of the martyrs” has been “the seed of the church.” It has been, as the old herbalists had it, like the herb camomile, the more it is trodden on, the more it grows; and the more the church has been ill-treated, the more it has prospered. Behold the mountains where the Albigenses walk in their white garments; see the stakes of smithfield, not yet forgotten; behold ye the fields among the towering hills, where brave hands kept themselves free from despotic tyranny. Mark ye the Pilgrim Fathers, driven by a government of persecution across the briny deep. See what vitality the gospel has. Plunge her under the wave, and she rises, the purer for her washing; thrust her in the fire, and she comes out, the more bright for her burning; cut her in sunder, and each piece shall make another church; behead her, and like the hydra of old, she shall have a hundred heads for every one you cut away. She can not die, she must live; for she has the power of God within her.

Do you want another proof? I give you a better one than the last. I do not wonder that the church has outlived persecution so much as I wonder she has outlived the unfaithfulness of her professed teachers. Never was church so abused as the church of Christ has been, all through her history; from the days of Diotrefes, who sought to have the pre-eminence, even to these later times, we can read of proud, arrogant prelates, and supercilious, haughty lords over God’s inheritance. Bonners, Dunstans, and men of all sorts, have come into her ranks, and done all they could to kill her; and with their lordly priestcraft they have tried to turn her aside. And what shall we say to that huge apostacy of Rome? A thousand miracles that ever the church outlived that! When her pretended head became apostate, and all her bishops disciples of hell, and she had gone far away, wonder of wonders, that she should come out, in the days of the glorious Reformation, and should still live. And, even now,

when I mark the supineness of many of my brethren in the ministry—when I mark their utter and entire inefficiency of doing aught for God—when I see their waste of time, preaching now and then on the Sunday, instead of going to the highways and hedges and preaching the gospel everywhere to the poor—when I see the want of unction in the church itself, the want of prayerfulness—when I see wars and fightings, factions and disunions—when I see hot blood and pride, even in the meetings of the saints; I say it is a thousand thousand miracles that the church of God should be alive at all, after the unfaithfulness of her members, her ministers, and her bishops. She has the power of God within her, or else she would have been destroyed; for she has got enough within her own loins to work her destruction.

“But,” says one, “you have not yet proved it is the power of God to my understanding.” Sir, I will give you another proof There are not a few of you, who are now present, who would be ready, I know, if it were necessary, to rise in your seats and bear me witness that I speak the truth. There are some who, not many months ago, were drunkards; some who were loose livers; men who were unfaithful to every vow which should keep man to truth, and right, and chastity, and honesty, and integrity. Yes, I repeat, I have some here who look back to a life of detestable sin. You tell me, some of you, that for thirty years even (there is one such present now) you never listened to a gospel ministry, nor ever entered the house of God at all; you despised the Sabbath, you spent it in all kinds of evil pleasures, you plunged headlong into sin and vice, and your only wonder is, that God has not out you off long ago, as cumberers of the ground; and now you are here, as different as light from darkness. I know your characters, and have watched you with a father’s love; for, child though I am, I am the spiritual father of some here whose years outcount mine by four times the number; and I have seen you honest who were thieves, and you sober who were drunkards. I have seen the wife’s glad eye sparkling with happiness; and many a woman has grasped me by the hand, shed her tears upon me, and said, “I bless God; I am a happy woman now; my husband is reclaimed, my house is blessed; our children are brought up in the fear of the Lord.” Not one or two, but scores of such are here. And, my friends, if these be not proofs that the gospel is the power of God, I say there is no proof of any thing to be had in the world, and every thing must be conjecture. Yes, and there worships with you this day (and if there be a secularist here, my friend will pardon me for alluding to him for a moment), there is in the house of God this day one who was a leader in your ranks, one who despised God, and ran very far away from right. And here he is! It is his honor this day to own himself a Christian; and I hope, when this sermon is ended, to grasp him by the hand, for he has done a valiant deed; he has bravely burned his papers in the sight of all the people, and has turned to God with full purpose of heart. I could give you proofs enough, if proofs were wanted, that the gospel has been to men the power of God and the wisdom of God. More proofs I could give, yea, thousands, one upon the other.

But we must notice the other points. Christ's gospel is the *wisdom* of God. Look at the gospel itself and you will see it to be wisdom. The man who scoffs and sneers at the gospel does so for no other reason but because he does not understand it. We have two of the richest books of theology extant that were written by professed infidels—by men that were so, I mean, before they wrote the books. You may have heard the story of Lord Lyttleton and West. I believe they determined to refute Christianity; one of them took up the subject of Paul's conversion, and the other, the subject of the resurrection; they sat down, both of them, to write books to ridicule those two events, and the effect was, that in studying the subject, they, both of them, became Christians, and wrote books which are now bulwarks to the church they hoped to have overthrown. Every man who looks the gospel fairly in the face, and gives it the study it ought to have, will discover that it is no false gospel, but a gospel that is replete with wisdom, and full of the knowledge of Christ. If any man will cavil at the Bible, he must cavil. There are some men who can find no wisdom anywhere, except in their own heads. Such men, however, are no judges of wisdom. We should not set a mouse to explain the phenomena of astronomy, nor should we set a man who is so foolish as to do nothing but cavil to understand the wisdom of the gospel. It needs that a man should at least be honest, and have some share of sense, or we can not dispute with him at all. Christ's gospel, to any man who believes it, is the wisdom of God.

Allow me just to hint that to be a believer in the gospel is no dishonor to a man's intellect. While the gospel can be understood by the poorest and the most illiterate, while there are shallows in it where a lamb may wade, there are depths where leviathan may swim. The intellect of Locke found ample space in the gospel; the mind of Newton submitted to receive the truth of inspiration as a little child, and found a something in its majestic being higher than itself, unto which it could not attain. The rudest and most untaught have been enabled, by the study of the holy Scripture of God's truth to enter the kingdom; and the most erudite have said of the gospel, it surpasses thought. I was thinking the other day what a vast amount of literature must be lost if the gospel be not true. No book was ever so suggestive as the Bible. Large tomes we have in our libraries which it takes all our strength to lift, all upon holy Scripture; myriads upon myriads of smaller volumes, tens of thousands of every shape and size, all written upon the Bible; and I have thought that the very suggestiveness of Scripture, the supernatural suggestiveness of holy Writ, may be in itself a proof of its divine wisdom, since no man has ever been able to write a book which could have so many commentators and so many writers upon its text as the Bible has received, by so much as one millionth part.

III. CHRIST IN A MAN THE GOSPEL IN THE SOUL, is the power of God and the wisdom of God. We will picture the Christian from his beginning to his end. We will give a short map of his history. He begins there, in that prison-house, with huge iron bars, which he can not file; in that dark, damp cell, where pestilence and death are bred. There, in poverty

and nakedness, without a pitcher to put to his thirsty lips, without a mouthful even of dry crust to satisfy his hunger, that is where he begins—in the prison chamber of conviction, powerless, lost and ruined. Between the bars I thrust my hand to him, and give to him in God's name the name of Christ to plead. Look at him; he has been filing away at these bars many and many a day, without their yielding an inch; but now he has got the name of Christ upon his lips; he puts his hands upon the bars, and one of them is gone, and another, and another; and he makes a happy escape, crying, "I am free, I am free, I am free! Christ has been the power of God to me, in bringing me out of my trouble." No sooner is he free, however, than a thousand doubts meet him. This one cries, "You are not elect;" another cries, "You are not redeemed;" another says, "You are not called;" another says, "You are not converted." "Avaunt," says he, "avaunt! Christ died;" and he just pleads the name of Christ as the power of God, and the doubts flee apace, and he walks straight on. He comes soon into the furnace of trouble; he is thrust into the innermost prison, and his feet are made fast in the stocks. God has put his hand upon him. He is in deep trouble; at midnight he begins to sing of Christ; and lo! the walls begin to totter, and the foundation of the prison to shake; and the man's chains are taken off, and he comes out free; for Christ hath delivered him from trouble. Here is a hill to climb, on the road to heaven. Wearily he pants up the side of that hill, and thinks he must die ere he can reach the summit. The name of Jesus is whispered in his ear; he leaps to his feet, and pursues his way, with fresh courage, until the summit is gained, when he cries, "Jesus Christ is the strength of my song; he also hath become my salvation." See him again. He is on a sudden beset by many enemies; how shall he resist them? With this true sword, this true Jerusalem blade, Christ, and him crucified. With this he keeps the devil at arm's length; with this he fights against temptation, and against lust, against spiritual wickedness in high places, and with this he resists. Now, he has come to his last struggle; the river Death rolls black and sullen before him; dark shapes rise upward from the flood, and howl and fright him. How shall he cross the stream? How shall he find a landing place on the other side? Dread thoughts perplex him for a moment; he is alarmed; but he remembers, Jesus died; and catching up that watchword he ventures to the flood. Before his feet the Jordan flies apace; like Israel of old, he walks through, dry shod, singing as he goes to heaven, "Christ is with me, Christ is with me, passing through the stream ! Victory, victory, victory, to him that loveth me!"

To the Christian in his own experience Christ is ever the power of God. As for temptation he can meet that with Christ; as for trouble he can endure that through Christ who strengthens him, yea, he can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Have you never seen a Christian in trouble, a true Christian? I have read a story of a man who was converted to God by seeing the conduct of his wife in the hour of trouble. They had a lovely child, their only offspring. The father's heart doted on it perpetually, and the mother's soul was knit up in the heart of the little one. It lay sick upon its bed,

and the parents watched it night and day. At last it died. The father had no God: he rent his hair, he rolled upon the floor in misery, wallowed upon the earth, cursing his being, and defying God in the utter casting down of his agony. There sat his wife, as fond of the child as ever he could be; and though tears would come, she gently said “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” “What,” said he, starting to his feet, “you love that child? I thought that when that child died you would break your heart. Here am I, a strong man. I am mad: here are you, a weak woman, and yet you are strong and bold; tell me what it is possesses you?” Said she, “Christ is my Lord, I trust in him; surely I can give this child to him who gave himself for me.” From that instant the man became a believer. “There must,” said he, “be some truth and some power in the gospel, which could lead you to believe in such a manner, under such a trial.” Christians! try to exhibit that spirit wherever you are, and prove to the worldling that in your experience at least “Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

And now the last point. In the *Christian’s experience*, Christ is wisdom, as well as power. If you want to be a thoroughly learned man the best place to begin, is to begin at the Bible, to begin at Christ. It is said that even children learn to read more quickly from the Bible than from any other book; and this I am sure of, that we, who are but grown-up children, will learn better and learn faster by beginning with Christ than we could by beginning with any thing else. I remember saying once, and as I can not say it better I will repeat it, that before I knew the gospel I gathered up a heterogeneous mass of all kinds of knowledge from here, there, and everywhere; a bit of chemistry, a bit of botany, a bit of astronomy, and a bit of this, that, and the other. I put them altogether, in one great confused chaos. When I learned the gospel, I got a shelf in my head to put every thing away upon just where it should be. It seemed to me as if, when I had discovered Christ and him crucified, I had got the center of the system, so that I could see every other science revolving around in order. From the earth, you know, the planets appear to move in a very irregular manner—they are progressive, retro grade, stationary; but if you could get upon the sun, you would see them marching round in their constant, uniform, circular motion. So with knowledge. Begin with any other science you like, and truth will seem to be awry. Begin with the science of Christ crucified, and you will begin with the sun, you will see every other science moving round it in complete harmony. The greatest mind in the world will be evolved by beginning at the right end. The old saying is, “Go from nature up to nature’s God;” but it is hard work going up hill. The best thing is to go from nature’s God down to nature; and if you once get to nature’s God, and believe him and love him, it is surprising how easy it is to hear music in the waves, and songs in the wild whisperings of the winds; to see God everywhere, in the stones, in the rocks, in the rippling brooks, and hear him everywhere, in the lowing of cattle, in the rolling of thunder, and in the fury of tempests. Get Christ first, put him in the right place, and you will find him to be the wisdom of God in your own experience.

But wisdom is not knowledge; and we must not confound the two. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge; and Christ's gospel helps us, by teaching us the right use of knowledge. It directs us. Yon Christian has lost his way in a dark wood; but God's Word is a compass to him, and a lantern, too: he finds his way by Christ. He comes to a turn in the road. Which is right, and which is wrong? He can not tell. Christ is the great sign-post, telling him which way to go. He sees every day new straits attend; he knows not which way to steer. Christ is the great pilot who puts his hand on the tiller, and makes him wise to steer through the shoals of temptation and the rocks of sin. Get the gospel, and you are a wise man. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and right understanding have they who keep his commandments." Ah! Christian, you have had many doubts, but you have had them all unriddled, when you have come to the cross of Christ. You have had many difficulties; but they have been all explained in the light of Calvary. You have seen mysteries, when you have brought them to the face of Christ, made clear and manifest, which once you never could have known. Allow me to remark here, that some people make use of Christ's gospel to illuminate their heads, instead of making use of it to illuminate their hearts. They are like the farmer Rowland Hill once described. The farmer is sitting, by the fire with his children; the cat is purring on the hearth, and they are all in great comfort. The plowman rushes in and cries, "Thieves! thieves! thieves!" The farmer rises up in a moment, grasps the candle, holds it up to his head, rushes after the thieves, and, says Rowland Hill, "he tumbles over a wheelbarrow, because he holds the light to his head, instead of holding it to his feet." So there are many who just hold religion up to illuminate their intellect, instead of holding it down to illuminate their practice; and so they make a sad tumble of it, and cast themselves into the mire, and do more hurt to their Christian profession in one hour than they will ever be able to retrieve. Take care that you make the wisdom of God, by God's Holy Spirit, a thing of true wisdom, directing your feet into his statutes, and keeping you in his ways.

And now a practical appeal, and we have done. I have been putting my arrow on the string; and if I have used any light similes, I have but done so just as the archer tips his arrow with a feather, to make it fly the better. I know that a rough quaint saying often sticks, when another thing is entirely for-gotten. Now let us draw the bow, and send the arrow right at your hearts. Men, brethren, fathers, how many of you have felt in yourselves that Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God? Internal evidence is the best evidence in the world for the truth of the gospel. No Paley or Butler can prove the truth of the gospel so well as Mary, the servant girl yonder, that has got the gospel in her heart, and the power of it manifest in her life. Say, has Christ ever broken your bonds and set you free? Has he delivered you from your evil life, and from your sin? Has he given you "a good hope through grace," and can you now say, "On him I lean; on my beloved I stay myself?" If so, go away and rejoice: you are a saint; for the apostle has said, "He is unto us who are saved, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." But if you can not say this, allow me affectionately

to warn you. If you want not this power of Christ, and this wisdom of Christ now, you will want them in a few short moments, when God shall come to judge the quick and the dead, when you shall stand before his bar, and when all the deeds that you have done shall be read before an assembled world. You will want religion then. O that you had grace to tremble now; grace to “kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” Hear ye how to be saved, and I have done. Do you feel that you are a sinner? Are you conscious that you have rebelled against God? Are you willing to acknowledge your transgressions, and do you hate and abhor them, while at the same time you feel you can do nothing to atone for them? Then hear this. Christ died for you; and if he died for you, you can not be lost. Christ died in vain for no man for whom he died. If you are a penitent and a believer, he died for you, and you are safe; go your way: rejoice “with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;” for he who has taught you your need of a Saviour, will give you that Saviour’s blood to be applied to your conscience, and you shall ere long, with yonder blood-washed host, praise God and the Lamb saying, “Hallelujah, for ever, Amen!” Only do you feel that you are a sinner? If not, I have no gospel to preach to you; I can but warn you. But if you feel your lost estate, and come to Christ, come, and welcome, for he will never cast you away.

Heavenly Rest

A Sermon

(No. 133)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 24, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”—[Hebrews 4:9](#).

THE Apostle proved, in the former part of this and the latter part of the preceding chapter, that there was a rest promised in Scripture called the rest of God. He proved that Israel did not attain that rest for God sware in his wrath, saying, “They shall not enter into my rest.” He proved that this did not merely refer to the rest of the land of Canaan; for he says that after they were in Canaan, David himself speaks again in after ages concerning the rest of God, as a thing which was yet to come. Again he proves, that “seeing those to whom it was promised did not enter in, because of unbelief, and it remaineth that some must enter in, therefore,” saith he, “there remaineth a rest to the people of God.”

“My rest,” says God: the rest of God! Something more wonderful than any other kind of rest. In my text it is (in the original) called the *Sabbatism*—not the Sabbath, but the rest of the Sabbath—not the outward ritual of the Sabbath, which was binding upon the Jew, but the inward spirit of the sabbath, which is the joy and delight of the Christian. “There remaineth therefore”—because others have not had it, because some are to have it—“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

Now, this rest, I believe, is partly enjoyed on earth. “We that have believed do enter into rest,” for we have ceased from our own works, as God did from his. But the full fruition and rich enjoyment of it remains in the future and eternal state of the beatified on the other side the stream of death. Of that it shall be our delightful work to talk a little this morning. And oh! if God should help me to raise but one of his feeble saints on the wings of love to look within the veil, and see the joys of the future, I shall be well contented to have made the joy-bells ring in one heart at least, to have set one eye flashing with joy, and to have made one spirit light with gladness. The rest of heaven! I shall try first to *exhibit it* and then to *extol it*.

I. First, I shall try to EXHIBIT the rest of heaven; and in doing so I shall exhibit it, first by way of contrast, and then by way of comparison.

1. To begin then, I shall try to exhibit heaven *by way of contrast*. The rest of the righteous in glory is now to be contrasted with certain other things.

We will contrast it, first, *with the best estate of the worldling and the sinner*. The worldling has frequently a good estate. Sometimes his vats overflow, his barns are crammed, his heart is full of joy and gladness, there are periods with him when he flourishes like a green bay

tree, when field is added to field, and house to house, when he pulls down his barns and builds greater, when the river of his joy is full, and the ocean of his life is at its flood with joy and blessedness. But sh! beloved, the state of the righteous up there is not for a moment to be compared with the joy of the sinner;—it is so infinitely superior, so far surpassing it, that it seems impossible that I should even try to set it in contrast. The worldling, when his corn and his wine are increased, has a glad eye and A joyous heart; but even then he has the direful thought that *he may soon leave his wealth*. He remembers that death may cut him down, that he must then leave all his fair riches behind him, and sleep like the meanest of the land in a narrow coffin, six feet of earth his only heritage. Not so the righteous man: he has obtained an inheritance which is “undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” He knows that there is no possibility of his losing his joys;

“He is securely blessed,
Has done with sin, and care, and woe,
And doth with Jesus rest.”

He has no dread of dissolution, no fear of the coffin or the shroud, and so far the life of heaven is not worthy to be put in comparison with the life of the sinner. But the worldling, with all his joys, always has *a worm at the root* of them. Ye votaries of pleasure! the blush upon your cheek is frequently but a painted deception. Ah! ye sons and daughters of gaiety! the light foot of your dance is not in keeping with the heavy woe of your miserable spirits. Do you not confess that if by the excitement of company you for awhile forget the emptiness of your heart, yet silence, and the hour of midnight, and the waking watches of your bed, bid you sometimes think that there must be something more blessed than the mere wanderings of gaiety in which you now are found? You are trying the world some of you; speak then! Do you not find it empty? Might it not be said of the world, as an old philosopher said of it when he represented a man with it in his hands smiting it and listening to its ringing? Touch it, touch it I make it ring again; it is empty. So it is with the world. You know it is so; and if you know it not as yet, the day is coming when after you have plucked the sweets you shall be pricked with the thorn, and when you shall find that all is unsatisfactory that does not begin and end with God. Not so the Christian in heaven. For him there are no nights; and if there be times of solitude and rest, he is ever filled with ecstatic joy. His river floweth ever full of bliss, without one pebble of sorrow over which it ripples, he has no aching conscience, no “aching void the world can never fill.” He is supremely blessed, satisfied with favor, and full with the goodness of the Lord. And ye know, ye worldlings, that your best estates often bring you great anxiety, *lest they should depart from you*. You are not so foolish yet as to conceive that riches endure for ever. You men of business are frequently led to see that riches take to themselves wings and fly away. You have accumulated a fortune; but you find it is harder to retain than it is to get. You are seeking after a competence; but you find that you grasp at shadows that flit away—that the everlasting vicissitudes of business and

the constant changes of mankind are causes of prudent alarm to you, for you fear that you shall lose your gods, and that your gourd shall be eaten by the worm, and fall down, and your shadow shall be taken away. Not so the Christian. He lives in a house that can never hasten to decay; he wears a crown, the glister of which shall never be dim; he has a garment which shall never wax old; he has bliss that never can depart from him, nor he from it. He is now firmly set, like a pillar of marble in the temple of God. The world may rock, the tempest may sway it like the cradle of a child; but there, above the world, above the perpetual revolution of the stars, the Christian stands secure and immovable; his rest infinitely surpasseth yours. Ah I ye shall go to all the fabled luxuries of eastern monarchs, and see their dainty couches and their luscious wines. Behold the riches of their pleasantries! How charming is the music that lulls them to their sleep! How gently moves the fan that wafts them to their slumber! But ah!

“I would not change my blest estate
For all the world calls good or great;
And whilst my faith can keep her hold
I envy not the sinner’s gold” —

I reckon that the richest, highest, noblest condition of a worldly man is not worthy to be compared with the joy—that is to be revealed hereafter in the breasts of those who are sanctified. O ye spendthrift mortals, that for one merry dance and a giddy life will lose a world of joys! O fools that catch at bubbles and lose realities! O ten thousand times mad men, that grasp at shadows and lose the substance! What! sirs do you think a little round of pleasure, a few years of gaiety and merriment, just a little time of the tossing about, to and fro, of worldly business, is a compensation for eternal ages of unfading bliss! Oh! how foolish will you conceive yourselves to be, when you are in the next state, when cast away from heaven you will see the saints blessed! I think I hear your mournful soliloquy, “Oh! how cheaply did I sell my soul! What a poor price did I get for all I have now lost! I have lost the palace and the crown, and the joy and bliss for ever, and am shut up in hell! And for what did I lose it? I lost it for the lascivious wanton kiss. I lost it for the merry drunken song; I lost it for just a few short years of pleasures, which, after all, were only painted pleasures!” Oh! I think I see you in your lost estates, cursing yourselves, rending your hair, that you should have sold heaven for counters and have changed away eternal life for pitiful farthings, which were spent quickly and which burned your hand in the spending of them! Oh! that ye were wise, that ye would weigh those things, and reckon that a life of the greatest happiness here is nothing compared with the glorious hereafter: “There remaineth a rest to the people of God.”

Now let me put it in *more pleasing contrast*. I shall contrast the rest of the believer above with the miserable estate of the believer sometimes here below. Christians have their sorrows. Sinners have their spots skies have their clouds, and Christians have their sorrows too. But oh!

how different will the state of the righteous be up there, from the state of the believer here! Here the Christian has to suffer anxiety. He is anxious to serve his Master, to do his best in his day and generation His constant cry is—"Help me to serve thee, O my God," and he looks out, day after day, with a strong desire for opportunities of doing good. Ah! if he be an active Christian, he will have much labor, much toil, in endeavoring to serve his Master; and there will be times when he will say, "My soul is in haste to be gone; I am not wearied of the labor, I am wearied in it. To toil thus in the sun, though for a good Master, is not the thing that just now I desire." Ah! Christian, the day shall soon be over, and thou shalt no longer have to toil; the sun is nearing the horizon; it shall rise again with a brighter day than thou hast ever seen before. There, up in heaven, Luther has no more to face a thundering Vatican; Paul has no more to run from city to city, and continent to continent, there Baxter has no more to toil in his pulpit, to preach with a broken heart to hard hearted sinners, there no longer has Knox to "cry aloud and spare not" against the immoralities of the false church; there no more shall be the strained lung, and the tired throat, and the aching eye; no more shall the Sunday school teacher feel that his Sabbath is a day of joyful weariness; no more shall the tract distributor meet with rebuffs. No, there, those who have served their country and their God, those who have toiled for man's welfare, with all their might, shall enter into everlasting rest. Sheathed is the sword, the banner is furled, the fight is over, the victory won; and they rest from their labors.

Here, too, the Christian is always *sailing onward*, he is always in motion he feels that he has not yet attained. Like Paul he can say "Forgetting the things that are behind, I press forward to that which is before." But there his weary head shall be crowned with unfading light. There the ship that has been speeding onward shall furl its sails in the port of eternal bliss. There he who, like an arrow, has sped his way shall be fixed for ever in the target. There we who like fleeting clouds were driven by every wind, shall gently distil in one perennial shower of everlasting joy. There is no progress, no motion there; they are at rest, they have attained the summit of the mountain, they have ascended to their God and our God. Higher they cannot go; they have reached the *Ultima Thule*, there are no fortunate islands beyond; this is life's utmost end of happiness; and they furl their sails, rest from their labors, and enjoy themselves for aye. There is a difference between the progress of earth and the perfect fixity of the rest of heaven.

Here, too, the believer is often the subject of *doubt and fear*. "Am I his or am I not?" is often the cry. He trembleth lest he should be deceived, at times he almost despairs, and is inclined not to put his name down as one of the children of God. Dark insinuations are whispered into his ears, he thinks that God's mercy is clean gone for ever, and that he will not be mindful of him any more. Again, his sins some times upbraid him, and he thinks God will not have mercy on him. He has a poor fainting heart; he is like Ready-to-halt, he has to go all his way on crutches; he has a poor feeble mind, always tumbling down over a

straw, and fearing one day he shall be drowned in a cart-rut. Though the lions are chained he is as much afraid of them as if they were loose. Hill Difficulty often afrights him; going down into the valley of humiliation is often troublesome work to him; but there, there are no hills to climb, no dragons to fight, no foes to conquer, no dangers to dread. Ready-to-halt, when he dies, will bury his crutches, and Feeblemind will leave his feebleness behind him; Fearing will never fear again; poor Doubting-heart will learn confidently to believe. Oh, joy above all joys! The day is coming when I shall “know as I am known,” when I shall not want to ask whether I am his or not, for in his arms encircled, there shall be no room for doubt. Oh! Christian, you think there are slips between your lips and that cup of joy, but when you grasp the handle of that cup with your hand, and are drinking draughts of ineffable delight, then you will have no doubt or fear.

“There you shall see his face,
And never, never sin
There from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

Here, too, on earth, the Christian has to *suffer*; here he has the aching head and the pained body; his limbs may be bruised or broken, disease may rack him with torture; he may be an afflicted one from his birth, he may have lost an eye or an ear or he may have lost many of his powers; or if not, being of a weakly constitution he may have to spend the most of his days and nights upon the bed of weariness. Or if his body be sound, yet what suffering he has in his mind! Conflicts between depravity and gross temptations from the evil one, assaults of hell, perpetual attacks of divers kinds, from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But there, no aching head no weary heart; there no palsied arm, no brow ploughed with the furrows of old age; there the lost limb shall be recovered, and old age shall find itself endowed with perpetual youth, there the infirmities of the flesh shall be left behind, given to the worm and devoured by corruption. There they shall flit, as on the wings of angels, from pole to pole, and from place to place, without weariness or anguish; there they shall never need to lie upon the bed of rest, or the bed of suffering, for day without night, with joy unflagging, they shall circle God’s throne rejoicing, and ever praise him who hath said, “The inhabitants there shall never be sick.”

There, too, they shall be free from *persecution*. Here Sicilian Vespers, and St. Bartholomew, and Smithfield, are well-known words; but there shall be none to taunt them with a cruel word, or touch them with a cruel hand. There emperors and kings are not known, and those who had power to torture them cease to be. They are in the society of saints; they shall be free from all the idle converse of the wicked, and from their cruel jeers set free for ever. Set free from persecution! Ye army of martyrs, ye were slain, ye were torn asunder, ye were cast to wild beasts, ye wandered about in sheep skins and goats’ skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented. I see you now, a mighty host. The habiliments you wear are torn with thorns;

your faces are scarred with sufferings; I see you at your stakes, and on your crosses; I hear your words of submission on your racks, I see you in your prisons, I behold you in your pillories—but

“Now ye are arrayed in white,
Brighter than the noonday-sun
Fairest of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal throne.”

These are they, who “for their Master died, who love the cross and crown;” they waded through seas of blood, in order to obtain the inheritance; and there they are, with the blood-red crown of martyrdom about their heads, that ruby brightness, far excelling every other. Yes, there is no persecution there. “There remaineth a rest for the people of God.”

Alas! in this mortal state the child of God is also subject to *sin*; even he faileth in his duty, and wandereth from his God; even he doth not walk in all the law of his God blameless, though he desireth to do it. Sin now troubleth him constantly; but there sin is dead, there they have no temptation to sin, from without or from within, but they are perfectly free to serve their Master. Here the child of God has sometimes to weep repentingly of his backslidings; but there they never shed tears of penitence, for they have never cause to do so.

And last of all, here, the child of God has to wet the cold ashes of his relatives with *tears*; here he has to bid adieu to all that is lovely and fair of mortal race; here it is he hears, “earth to earth, and dust to dust, and ashes to ashes,” while the solemn music of the dust upon the coffin lid beats doleful time to those words. Here is the mother buried, the child snatched away, the husband rent from the bosom of a loving wife, the brother parted from the sister. The plate upon the coffin, the last coat of arms of earth, earth’s last emblems are here ever before our eyes. But there never once shall be heard the toll of the funeral bell, no hearse with plumes has ever darkened the streets of gold, no emblems of sorrow have ever intruded into the homes of the immortal, they are strangers to the meaning of death; they cannot die—they live for ever, having no power to decay, and no possibility of corruption. Oh! rest of the righteous, how blest art thou, where families shall again be bound up in one bundle, where parted friends shall again meet to part no more, and where the whole church of Christ united in one mighty circle, shall together praise God and the Lamb throughout eternal ages.

Brethren, I have tried thus to set the rest of the righteous in the way of contrast; I feel I have failed. Poor are the words I can utter to tell you of immortal things. Even holy Baxter himself, when he wrote of the “Saints’ Rest,” paused and said; “But these are only tinklings compared with the full thunders of heaven.” I cannot tell you, dear friends, nor can mortal tell, what God hath prepared for them that love him.

2. And now I shall try very briefly to exhibit this contrast *in the way of comparison*. The Christian hath some rest here, but nothing compared with the rest which is to come.

There is the *rest of the church*. When the believer joins the church of God, and becomes united with them, he may expect to rest. The good old writer of the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” says, that when the weary pilgrims were once admitted to the house Beautiful, they were shown to sleep in a chamber called peace,” or “rest.” The church-member at the Lord’s table has a sweet enjoyment of rest in fellowship with the saints; but ah! up there the rest of church fellowship far surpasses anything that is known here; for there are no divisions there, no angry words at the church meetings, no harsh thoughts of one another, no bickerings about doctrine, no fightings about practice. There Baptist, and Presbyterian, and Independent, and Wesleyan, and Episcopalian, serving the same Lord, and having been washed in the same blood, sing the same song, and are all joined in one. There pastors and deacons never look coolly on each other; no haughty prelates here, no lofty-minded ministers there, but all meek and lowly, all knit together in brotherhood; they have a rest which surpasseth all the rest of the church on earth.

There is, again, a rest of *faith* which a Christian enjoys; a sweet rest. Many of us have known it. We have known what it is, when the billows of trouble have run high, to hide ourselves in the breast of Christ, and feel secure. We have cast our anchor deep into the rocks of God’s promise, we have gone to sleep in our chamber and have not feared the tempest, we have looked at tribulation, and have smiled at, we have looked at death himself, and have laughed him to scorn, we have had much trust by Christian faith that, dauntless and fearless, nothing could move us. Yes, in the midst of calumny, reproach, slander and contempt, we have said, “I shall not be moved, for God is on my side.” But the rest up there is better still more unruffled, more sweet, more perfectly calm, more enduring, and more lasting than even the rest of faith.

And, again, the Christian sometimes has the blessed rest of *communion*. There are happy moments when he puts his head on the Saviour’s breast—when, like John, he feels that he is close to the Saviour’s heart, and there he sleeps. “God giveth his beloved sleep;” not the sleep of unconsciousness, but the sleep of joy. Happy, happy, happy are the dreams we have had on the couch of communion; blessed have been the times, when, like the spouse in Solomon’s song, we could say of Christ, “His left hand was under my head, and with his right hand did he embrace me.”

“But sweeter still the fountain head,
Though sweet may be the stream;”

When we shall have plunged into a very bath of joy, we shall have found the delights even of communion on earth to have been but the dipping of the finger in the cup, but the dipping of the bread in the dish, whereas heaven itself shall be the participation of the whole of the joy, and not the mere antepast of it. Here we sometimes enter into the portico of happiness, there we shall go into the presence chamber of the King, here we look over the hedge and see the flowers in heaven’s garden, there we shall walk between the beds of bliss,

and pluck fresh flowers at each step; here we just look and see the sunlight of heaven in the distance, like the lamps of the thousand-gated cities shining afar off, but there we shall see them in all their blaze of splendor, here we listen to the whisperings of heaven's melody, borne by winds from afar; but there, entranced, amidst the grand oratorio of the blessed, we shall join in the everlasting hallelujah to the great Messiah, the God, the I AM. Oh! again I say, do we not wish to mount aloft, and fly away, to enter into the rest which remaineth to the people of God?

II. And now, yet more briefly, and then we shall have done. I am to endeavor to EXTOL this rest, as I have tried to EXHIBIT it. I would extol this rest for many reasons; and oh! that I were eloquent, that I might extol it as it deserves! Oh! for the lip of angel, and the burning tongue of cherub, to talk now of the bliss of the sanctified and of the rest of God's people!

It is, first, a *perfect* rest. They are wholly at rest in heaven. Here rest is but partial. I hope in a little time to cease from every-day labors for a season, but then the head will think, and the mind may be looking forward to prospective labor, and whilst the body is still, the brain will yet be in motion. Here, on Sabbath days a vast multitude of you sit in God's house, but many of you are obliged to stand, and rest but little except in your mind, and even when the mind is at rest the body is wearied with the toil of standing. You have a weary mile perhaps, many miles, to go to your homes on the Sabbath day. And let the Sabbatarian say what he will, you may work on the Sabbath day, if you work for God; and this Sabbath day's work of going to the house of God is work for God, and God accepts it. For yourselves you may not labor, God commands you to rest, but if you have to toil these three, these four, these five, these six miles, as many of you have done, I will not and I must not blame you. "The priests in the sanctuary profane the Sabbath, and are blameless." It is toil and labor, it is true but it is for a good cause—for your Master. But there, my friends, the rest is perfect; the body there rests perpetually, the mind too always rests; though the inhabitants are always busy, always serving God, yet they are never weary, never toil-worn, never fagged; they never fling themselves upon their couches at the end of the day, and cry, "Oh! when shall I be away from this land of oil?" They I never stand up in the burning sunlight, and wipe the hot sweat from their brow; they never rise from their bed in the morning, half refreshed, to go to laborious study. No, they are perfectly at rest, stretched on the couch of eternal joy. They know not the semblance of a tear; they have done with sin, and care, and woe, and, with their Saviour rest.

Again, it is a *seasonable* rest. How seasonable it will be for some of you! Ye sons of wealth, ye know not the toils of the poor; the horny-handed laborer, perhaps, you have not seen, and you not how he has to tug and to toil. Among my congregation I have many of a class, upon whom I have always looked with pity, poor women who must rise to-morrow morning with the sun, and begin that everlasting "stitch, stitch," that works their finger to the bone. And from Monday morning till Saturday night, many of you, my members, and

multitudes of you, my hearers, will not be able to lay aside your needle and your thread, except when, tired and weary, you fall back on your chair, and are lulled to sleep by your thoughts of labor! Oh! how seasonable will heaven's rest be to you! Oh! how glad will you be, when you get there, to find that there are no Monday mornings, no more toil for you, but rest, eternal rest! Others of you have hard manual labor to perform; you have reason to thank God that you are strong enough to do it and you are not ashamed of your work; for labor is an honor to a man. But still there are times when you say, "I wish I were not so dragged to death by the business of London life." We have but little rest in this huge city, our day is longer, and our work is harder than our friends in the country. You have sometimes sighed to go into the green fields for a breath of fresh air, you have longed to hear the song of the sweet birds that used to wake you when you were lads; you have regretted the bright blue sky, the beautiful flowers, and the thousand charms of a country life. And perhaps, you will never get beyond this smoky city, but remember, when you get up there, "sweet fields arrayed in living green" and "rivers of delight" shall be the place where you shall rest, you shall have all the joys you can conceive of in that home of happiness; and though worn and weary, you come to your grave, tottering on your staff; having journeyed through the wilderness of life, like a weary camel, which has only stopped on the Sabbath to sip its little water at the well, or to be baited at the oasis, there you will arrive at your journey's end, laden with gold and spices, and enter into the grand caravanserai of heaven, and enjoy for ever the things you have wearily carried with you here.

And I must say, that to others of us who have not to toil with our hands, heaven will be a seasonable rest. Those of us who have to tire our brain day after day will find it no slight boon to have an everlasting rest above. I will not boast of what I may do, there may be many who do more, there may be many who are perpetually and daily striving to serve God, and are using their mind's best energies in so doing. But this much I may say, that almost every week I have the pleasure of preaching twelve times, and often in my sleep do I think of what I shall say next time. Not having the advantage of laying out my seven shillings and sixpence in buying manuscripts, it costs me hard diligent labor to find even something to say. And I sometimes have a difficulty to keep the hopper full in the mill, I feel that if I had not now and then a rest I should have no wheat for God's children. Still it is on, on, on, and on we must go, we hear the chariot wheels of God behind us, and we dare not stop, we think that eternity is drawing nigh, and we must go on. Rest to us now is more than labor, we want to be at work; but oh! how seasonable it shall be, when to the minister it shall be said—

“Servant of God, well done!
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy.”

It will be seasonable rest. You that are weary with state cares, and have to learn the ingratitude of men; you that have sought honors, and have got them to your cost, you seek to do your best, but your very independence of spirit is called servility, whilst your servility would have been praised! You who seek to honor God, and not to honor men, who will not bind yourselves to parties, but seek in your own independent and honest judgment to serve your country and your God you, I say, when God shall see fit to call you to himself, will find it no small joy to have done with parliaments, to have done with states and kingdoms, and to have laid aside your honors, to receive honors more lasting amongst those who dwell for ever before the throne of the Most High.

One thing, and then once more, and then farewell. This rest, my brethren, ought to be extolled, because it is *eternal*. Here my best joys bear “mortar” on their brow; here my fair flowers fade; here my sweet cups have dregs and are soon empty; here my sweetest birds must die, and their melody must soon be hushed; here my most pleasant days must have their nights; here the flowings of my bliss must have their ebbs, everything doth pass away, but there everything shall be immortal; the harp shall be unruined, the crown unwithered, the eye undimmed the voice unfaltering, the heart unwavering, and the being wholly consolidated unto eternity. Happy day, happy day, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and the mortal shall have put on immortality!

And then, lastly, this glorious rest is to be best of all commended for its *certainty*. “There remaineth a rest to the people of God.” Doubting one, thou hast often said, “I fear I shall never enter heaven.” Fear not, all the people of God shall enter there; there is no fear about it. I love the quaint saying of a dying man, who, in his country brogue, exclaimed, “I have no fear of going home; I have sent all before me. God’s finger is on the latch of my door and I am ready for him to enter.” “But,” said one “are you not afraid least you should miss your inheritance?” “Nay,” said he “nay, there is one crown in heaven that the angel Gabriel could not wear; it will fit no head but mine. There is one throne in heaven that Paul the apostle could not fill; it was made for me, and I shall have it. There is one dish at the banquet that I must eat, or else it will be untasted, for God has set it apart for me.” O Christian, what a joyous thought! thy portion is secure! “there remaineth a rest.” “But cannot I forfeit it?” No, it is entailed. If I be a child of God I shall not lose it. It is mine as securely as if I were there.

“Come, Christian, mount to Pisgah’s top,
And view the landscape o’er.”

Seest thou that little river of death, glistening in the sunlight, and across it dost thou see the pinnacles of the eternal city? Dost thou mark the pleasant suburbs and all the joyous inhabitants? Turn thine eye to that spot. Dost thou see where that ray of light is glancing now? There is a little spot there; dost thou see it? That is thy patrimony; that is thine. Oh, if thou couldst fly across thou wouldst see written upon it, “this remaineth for such an one, preserved for him only. He shall be caught up and dwell for ever with God.” Poor doubting

one; see thine inheritance; it is thine. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus thou art one of the Lord's people; if thou hast repented of sin thou art one of the Lord's people; if thou hast been renewed in heart thou art one of the Lord's people, and there is a place for thee, a crown for thee, a harp for thee. No one else shall have it but thyself, and thou shalt have it ere long. Just pardon me one moment if I beg of you to conceive of yourselves as being in heaven. Is it not a strange thing to think of—a poor clown in heaven? Think, how will you feel with your crown on your head? Weary matron, many years have rolled over you. How changed will be the scene when you are young again. Ah, toil-worn laborer, only think when thou shalt rest for aye. Canst thou conceive it? couldst thou but think for a moment, of thyself as being in heaven now, what a strange surprise would seize thee. Thou wouldst not so as much say, "What! are these streets of gold? What! are these walls of jasper?" "What, am I here? in white? Am I here, with a crown on my brow? Am I here singing, that was always groaning? What! I praise God that once cursed him? What! I lifting up my voice in his honor? Oh, precious blood that washed me clean! Oh, precious faith that set me free! Oh, precious Spirit that made me repent, else I had been cast away and been in hell! But oh! what wonders! Angels! I am surprised. I am enraptured! Wonder of wonders! Oh! gates of pearls, I long since heard of you! Oh! joys that never fade, I long since heard tell of you! But I am like the Queen of Sheba, the half has not yet been told me. Profusion, oh profusion of bliss!—wonder of wonders!—miracle of miracles! What a world I am in! And oh! that I am here, this is the topmost miracle of all!" And yet 'tis true, 'tis true; and that is the glory of it. It is true. Come, worm, and prove it, come, pall; come shroud; come, and prove it. Then come wings of faith, come, leap like a seraph; come, eternal ages, come, and ye shall prove that there are joys that the eye hath not seen, which the ear hath not heard, and which only God can reveal to us by his spirit. Oh! my earnest prayer is, that none of you may come short of this rest, but that ye may enter into it, and enjoy it for ever and ever. God give you his great blessing, for Jesus sake! Amen.

Elijah's Appeal to the Undecided

A Sermon

(No. 134)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 31, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him.”—[1 Kings 18:21](#).

IT WAS A DAY to be remembered, when the multitudes of Israel were assembled at the foot of Carmel and when the solitary prophet of the Lord came forth to defy the four hundred and fifty priests of the false god. We might look upon that scene with the eye of historical curiosity, and we should find it rich with interest. Instead of doing so, however, we shall look upon it with the eye of attentive consideration, and see whether we can not improve by its teachings. We have upon that hill of Carmel, and along the plain, three kinds of persons. We have first the devoted servant of Jehovah, a solitary prophet; we have, on the other hand, the decided servants of the evil one, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal; but the vast mass of that day belonged to a third class—they were those who had not fully determined whether fully to worship Jehovah, the God of their fathers, or Baal, the god of Jezebel. On the one hand, their ancient traditions led them to fear Jehovah, and on the other hand, their interest at court led them to bow before Baal. Many of them therefore, were secret and half-hearted followers of Jehovah, while they were the public worshipers of Baal. The whole of them at this juncture were halting between two opinions. Elijah does not address his sermon to the priests of Baal; he will have something to say to them by-and-by, he will preach them horrible sermons in deeds of blood. Nor has he aught to say to those who are the thorough servants of Jehovah, for they are not there; but his discourse is alone directed to those who are halting between two opinions.

Now, we have these three classes here this morning. We have, I hope, a very large number who are on Jehovah's side, who fear God and serve him; we have a number who are on the side of the evil one, who make no profession of religion, and do not observe even the outward symptoms of it; because they are both inwardly and outwardly the servants of the evil one. But the great mass of my hearers belong to the third class—the waverers. Like empty clouds they are driven hither and thither by the wind; like painted beauties, they lack the freshness of life; they have a name to live and are dead. Procrastinators, double-minded men, undecided persons, to you I speak this morning—“How long halt ye between two opinions?” May the question be answered by God's Spirit in your hearts, and may you be led to say, “No longer, Lord, do I halt; but this day I decide for thee, and am thy servant for ever!”

Let us proceed at once to the text. Instead of giving the divisions at the commencement, I will mention them one by one as I proceed.

I. First, you will note that *the prophet insisted upon the distinction which existed between the worship Baal and the worship of Jehovah*. Most of the people who were before him thought that Jehovah was God, and that Baal was God too; and that for this reason the worship of both was quite consistent. The great mass of them did not reject the God of their fathers wholly, nor did they bow before Baal wholly; but as polytheists, believing in many gods, they thought both Gods might be worshiped, and each of them have a share in their hearts. “No,” said the prophet when he began, “this will not do, these are *two* opinions; you can never make them one, they are two contradictory things which can not be combined. I tell you that instead of combining the two, which is impossible, you are halting between the two, which makes a vast difference.” “I will build in my house,” said one of them, “an altar for Jehovah here, and an altar for Baal there. I am of one opinion; I believe them both to be God.” “No, no,” said Elijah, “it can not be so; they are *two*, and must be two. These things are not one opinion, but two opinions No, you can not unite them.” Have I not many here who say, “I am worldly, but I am religious too; I can go to the Music Hall to worship God on Sunday; I went to the Derby races the other day: I go, on the one hand, to the place where I can serve my lusts; I am to be met with in every dancing room of every description, and yet at the same time I say my prayers most devoutly. May I not be a good churchman, or a right good dissenter, and a man of the world too? May I not, after all, hold with the hounds as well as run with the hare? May I not love God and serve the devil too—take the pleasure of each of them, and give my heart to neither? We answer—Not so, they are two opinions; you can not do it, they are distinct and separate. Mark Anthony yoked two lions to his chariot; but there are two lions no man ever yoked together yet—the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit. These can never go together. Two opinions you may hold in politics, perhaps, but then you will be despised by every body, unless you are of one opinion or the other, and act as an independent man. But two opinions in the matter of soul-religion you can not bold. If God be God, serve him, and do it thoroughly; but if this world be God, serve it, and make no profession of religion. If you are a worldling, and think the things of the world the best, serve them; devote yourself to them, do not be kept back by conscience; spite your conscience, and run into sin. But remember, if the Lord be your God, you can not have Baal too; you must have one thing or else the other. “No man can serve two *masters*.” If God be served, he will be a master; and if the devil be served he will not be long before he will be a master; and “ye can not serve two *masters*.” O! be wise, and think not that the two can be mingled together. How many a respectable deacon thinks that he can be covetous, and grasping in business, and grind the faces of the poor, and yet be a saint! O! liar to God and to man! He is no saint; he is the very chief of sinners! How many a very excellent woman, who is received into church fellowship among the people of God, and thinks herself one of

the elect, is to be found full of wrath and bitterness, a slave of mischief and of sin, a tattler, a slanderer, a busybody; entering into other people's houses, and turning every thing like comfort out of the minds of those with whom she comes in contact—and yet she is the servant of God and of the devil too! Nay, my lady this will never answer; the two never can be served thoroughly. Serve your master, whoever he be. If you do profess to be religious, be so thoroughly; if you make any profession to be a Christian, be one; but if you are no Christian, do not *pretend* to be. If you love the world, then love it; but cast off the mask, and do not be a hypocrite. The double-minded man is of all men the most despicable; the follower of Janus, who wears two faces, and who can look with one eye upon the (so-called) Christian world with great delight, and give his subscription to the Tract Society, the Bible Society, and the Missionary Society, but who has another eye over there, with which he looks at the Casino, the Coal-hole, and other pleasures, which I do not care to mention, but which some of you may know more of than I wish to know. Such a man, I say, is worse than the most reprobate of men, in the opinion of any one who knows how to judge. Not worse in his open character, but worse really, because he is not honest enough to go through with that he professes. And how many such are there in London, in England; everywhere else! They try to serve both masters; but it can not be; the two things can not be reconciled; God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, these never can meet; there never can be an agreement between them, they never can be brought into unity, and why should you seek to do it? "*Two opinions*," said the prophet. He would not allow any of his hearers to profess to worship both. "No," said he, "these are two opinions, and you are halting between the two."

II. In the second place, *the prophet calls these waverers to an account for the amount of time which they had consumed in making their choice*. Some of them might have replied, "We have not had yet an opportunity of judging between God and Baal; we have not yet had time enough to make up our minds;" but the prophet puts away that objection, and he says, "*How long* halt ye between two opinions? How long? For three years and a half not a drop of rain has fallen at the command of Jehovah; is not that proof enough? Ye have been all this time, three years and a half expecting, till I should come, Jehovah's servant, and give you rain; and yet, though you yourselves are starving, your cattle dead, your fields parched, and your meadows covered with dust, like the very deserts, yet all this time of judgment, and trial and affliction, has not been enough for you to make up your minds. "*How long* then," said he, "halt ye between two opinions?"

I speak not, this morning, to the thoroughly worldly; with them I have now nothing to do; another time I may address them. But I am now speaking to you who are seeking to serve God and to serve Satan; you who are trying to be Christian worldlings, trying to be members of that extraordinary corporation, called the "religious world," which is a thing that never had an existence except in title. You are endeavoring, if you can, to make up your mind which it shall be; you know you can not serve both, and you are coming now to the

period when you are saying, "Which shall it be? Shall I go thoroughly into sin, and revel in the pleasures of the earth, or become a servant of God?" Now, I say to you this morning, as the prophet did, "*How long* halt ye?" Some of you have been halting until your hair has grown gray; the sixtieth year of some of you is drawing nigh. Is not sixty years long enough to make up your choice? "*How long* halt ye?" Perhaps one of you may have tottered into this place, leaning on his staff, and you have been undecided up till now. Your eightieth year has come; you have been a religious character outwardly, but a worldly truly; you are still up to this date halting, saying, "I know not on which side to be." How long, sirs, in the name of reason, in the name of mortality, in the name of death, in the name of eternity, "*How long* halt ye between two opinions?" Ye middle-aged men, ye said when ye were youths, "When we are out of our apprenticeship we will become religious; let us sow our wild oats in our youth, and let us then begin to be diligent servants of the Lord." Lo! ye have come to middle age, and are waiting till that quiet villa shall be built, and ye shall retire from business, and then ye think ye will serve God. Sirs, ye said that same when ye came of age, and when your business began to increase. I therefore solemnly demand of you, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How much time do you want? O! young man, thou saidst in thine early childhood, when a mother's prayer followed thee, "I will seek God when I come to manhood;" and thou hast passed that day; thou art a man, and more than that, and yet thou art halting still. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" How many of you have been churchgoers and chapel-goers for years! Ye have been impressed, too, many a time, but ye have wiped the tears from your eyes, and have said, "I will seek God and turn to him with full purpose of heart;" and you are now just where you were. How many sermons do you want? How many more Sundays must roll away wasted? How many warnings, how many sicknesses, how many tollings of the bell to warn you that you must die? How many graves must be dug for your family before you will be impressed? How many plagues and pestilences must ravage this city before you will turn to God in truth? "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Would God ye could answer this question, and not allow the sands of life to drop, drop, drop from the glass saying, "When the next goes I will repent," and yet that next one findeth you impenitent. You say, "When the glass is just so low, I will turn to God." No, sir, no; it will not answer for you to talk so; for thou mayest find thy glass empty before thou thoughtest it bad begun to run low, and thou mayest find thyself in eternity when thou didst but think of repenting and turning to God. How long, ye gray heads, how long, ye men of ripe years, how long, ye youths and maidens, how long will ye be in this undecided, unhappy state? "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

Thus we have brought you so far. We have noted that there are two opinions, and we have asked the question, How long time you want to decide? One would think the question would require very little time, if time were all; if the will were not biased to evil and contrary to good, it would require no more time than the decision of a man who has to choose a

halter or life, wealth or poverty; and if we were wise, it would take no time at all; if we understood the things of God, we should not hesitate, but say at once, "Now God is my God, and that for ever."

III. But *the prophet charges these people with the absurdity of their position*. Some of them said, "What! prophet, may we not continue to halt between two opinions? We are not desperately irreligious, so we are better than the profane, certainly we are not thoroughly pious; but, at any rate, a little piety is better than none, and the mere profession of it keeps us decent, let us try both!" "Now," says the prophet, "how long halt ye?" or, if you like to read it so, "how long *limp* ye between two opinions?" (How long *wriggle* ye between two opinions? would be a good word, if I might employ it.) He represents them as like a man whose legs are entirely out of joint; he first goes on one side, and then on the other, and can not go far either way. I could not describe it without putting myself into a most ludicrous posture. "How long *limp* ye between two opinions?" The prophet laughs at them, as it were. And is it not true, that a man who is neither one thing or another is in a most absurd position? Let him go among the worldlings; they laugh under their sleeve, and say, "This is one of the Exeter Hall saints," or, "That is one of the elect." Let him go among the Christian people, those that are saints, and they say, "How a man can be so inconsistent, how he can come into our midst one day, and the next be found in such and such society, we can not tell." Methinks even the devil himself must laugh at such a man in scorn. "There," says he, "I am every thing that is bad; I do sometimes pretend to be an angel of light, and put on that garb; but you do really excell me in every respect, for I do it to get something by it, but you do not get any thing by it. You do not have the pleasures of this world, and you do not have the pleasures of religion either; you have the fears of religion without its hopes; you are afraid to do wrong, and yet you have no hope of heaven; you have the duties of religion without the joys; you have to do just as religious people do, and yet there is no heart in the matter; you have to sit down, and see the table all spread before you, and then you have not power to eat a single morsel of the precious dainties of the gospel." It is just the same with the world; you dare not go into this or that mischief that brings joy to the wicked man's heart; you think of what society would say. We do not know what to make of you. I might describe you, if I might speak as the Americans do but I will not. Ye are half one thing, and half the other. You come into the society of the saints, and try to talk as they talk; but you are like a man who has been taught French in some day-school in England; he makes a queer sort of Frenchified English, and Englishized French, and every one laughs at him. The English laugh at him for trying to do it, and the French laugh at him for failing in it. If you spoke your own language, if you just spoke out as a sinner, if you professed to be what you are, you would at least get the respect of one side; but now you are rejected by one class, and equally rejected by the other. You come into our midst, we can not receive you; you go amongst worldlings, they reject you too; you are too good for them, and too bad for us.

Where are you to be put? If there were a purgatory, that would be the place for you; where you might be tossed on the one side into ice, and on the other into the burning fire, and that for ever. But as there is no such place as purgatory, and as you really are a servant of Satan, and not a child of God, take heed, take heed, how long you stay in a position so absurdly ridiculous. At the day of judgment, wavering men will be the scoff and the laughter even of hell. The angels will look down in scorn upon the man who was ashamed to own his Master thoroughly, while hell itself will ring with laughter. When that grand hypocrite shall come there—that undecided man, they will say, “Aha! we have to drink the dregs, but above them there were sweets; you have only the dregs. You dare not go into the riotous and boisterous mirth of our youthful days, and now you have come here with us to drink the same dregs; you have the punishment without the pleasure.” O! how foolish will even the damned call you, to think that you halted between two opinions! “How long limp ye, wriggle ye, walk ye in an absurd manner, between two opinions?” In adopting either opinion, you would at least be consistent; but in trying to hold both, to seek to be both one and the other, and not knowing which to decide upon, you are limping between two opinions. I think a good translation is a very different one from that of the authorized version—“How long hop ye upon two sprays?” So the Hebrew has it. Like a bird, which perpetually flies from bough to bough, and is never still. If it keeps on doing this, it will never have a nest. And so with you: you keep leaping between two boughs, from one opinion to the other; and so between the two, you get no rest for the sole of your foot, no peace, no joy, no comfort, but are just a poor miserable thing all your life long.

IV. We have brought you thus far, then; we have shown you the absurdity of this halting. Now, very briefly, the next point in my text is this. The multitude who had worshiped Jehovah and Baal, and who were now undecided, might reply, “*But how do you know that we do not believe that Jehovah is God? How do you know we are not decided in opinion?*” The prophet meets this objection by saying, “I know you are not decided in opinion, because *you are not decided in practice*. If God be God, *follow him*; if Baal, *follow him*. You are not decided in practice.” Men’s opinions are not such things as we imagine. It is generally said now-a-days, that all opinions are right, and if a man shall honestly hold his convictions, he is, without doubt, right. Not so; truth is not changed by our opinions; a thing is either true or false of itself, and it is neither made true nor false by our views of it. It is for us, therefore, to judge carefully, and not to think that any opinion will do. Besides, opinions have influence upon the conduct, and if a man have a wrong opinion, he will, most likely, in some way or other, have wrong conduct, for the two usually go together. “Now,” said Elijah, “that you are not the servants of God, is quite evident, for you do not follow him; that you are not thoroughly servants of Baal either, is quite evident, for you do not follow him.” Now I address myself to you again. Many of you are not the servants of God; you do not follow him; you follow him a certain distance in the form, but not in the spirit; you follow him on Sundays; but

what do you do on Mondays? You follow him in religious company, in evangelical drawing-rooms, and so on; but what do you do in other society? You do not follow him. And, on the other hand, you do not follow Baal; you go a little way with the world, but there is a place to which you dare not go; you are too respectable to sin as others sin or to go the whole way of the world. Ye dare not go to the utmost lengths of evil. "Now," says the prophet, twitting them upon this—"if the Lord be God, follow him. Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions; if you believe the Lord to be God, carry it out in your daily life; be holy, be prayerful, trust in Christ, be faithful, be upright, be loving; give your heart to God, and follow him. If Baal be God, then follow him; but do not pretend to follow the other." Let your conduct back up your opinion; if you really think that the follies of this world are the best, and believe that a fine fashionable life, a life of frivolity and gayety, flying from flower to flower, getting honey from none, is the most desirable, carry it out. If you think the life of the debauchee is so very desirable, if you think his end is to be much wished for, if you think his pleasures are right, follow them. Go the whole way with them. If you believe that to cheat in business is right, put it up over your door—"I sell trickery goods here;" or if you do not say it to the public, tell your conscience so; but do not deceive the public; do not call the people to prayers when you are opening a "British Bank." If you mean to be religious, follow out your determination thoroughly; but if you mean to be worldly, go the whole way with the world. Let your conduct follow out your opinions. Make your life tally with your profession. Carry out your opinions whatever they be. But you dare not; you are too cowardly to sin as others do, honestly before God's sun; your conscience will not let you do it—and yet you are just so fond of Satan, that you dare not leave him wholly and become thoroughly the servants of God. O do not let your character be like your profession; either keep up your profession, or give it up: do be one thing or the other.

V. And now the prophet cries, "If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him," and in so doing, *he states the ground of his practical claim*. Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions. There is another objection raised by the crowd. "Prophet," says one, "then comest to demand a practical proof of our affection; then sayest, Follow God. Now, if I believe God to be God, and that is my opinion, yet I do not see what claim he has to my opinions." Now, mark how the prophet puts it: he says, "*If God be God*, follow him." The reason why I claim that you should follow out your opinion concerning God is, that God is God; God has a claim upon you, as creatures, for your devout obedience. One person replies, "What profit should I have, if I served God thoroughly? Should I be more happy? Should I get on better in this world? Should I have more peace of mind?" Nay, nay, that is a secondary consideration. The only question for you is, "If God be God follow him." Not if it be more advantageous to you; but, "*if God be God*, follow him." The secularist would plead for religion on the ground that religion might be the best for this world, and best for the world to come. Not so with the prophet; he says, "I do not put it on that ground, I insist

that it is your bounden duty, if you believe in God, simply because he is God, to serve him and obey him. I do not tell you it is for your advantage—it may be, I believe it is—but that I put aside from the question; I demand of you that you follow God, if you believe him to be *God*. If you do not think he is God; if you really think that the devil is God, then follow him; his pretended godhead shall be your plea, and you shall be consistent; but if God be God, if he made you, I demand that you serve him; if it is he who puts the breath into your nostrils, I demand that you obey him. If God be really worthy of your worship, and you really think so, I demand that you either follow him, or else deny that he is God at all.” Now, professor, if thou sayest that Christ’s gospel is the gospel, if thou believest in the divinity of the gospel, and puttest thy trust in Christ, I demand of thee to follow out the gospel, not merely because it will be to thy advantage, but because the gospel is divine. If thou makest a profession of being a child of God, if thou art a believer, and thinkest and believest religion is the best, the service of God the most desirable, I do not come to plead with thee because of any advantage thou wouldst get by being holy; it is on this ground that I put it, that the Lord is God; and if he be God, it is thy business to serve him. If his gospel be true, and thou believest it to be true, it is thy duty to carry it out. If thou sayest Christ is not the Son of God, carry out thy Jewish or thy infidel convictions, and see whether it will end well. If thou dost not believe Christ to be the Son of God, if thou art a Mohammedan, be consistent, carry out thy Mohammedan convictions, and see whether it will end well. But, take heed, take heed! If, however, thou sayest God is God, and Christ the Saviour, and the gospel true; I demand of thee, only on this account, that thou carry it out. What a strong plea some would think the prophet might have had, if he had said, “God is your fathers, God, therefore follow him!” But no, he did not come down to that; he said, “If God be God—I do not care whether he be your fathers’ God or not—follow him.” “Why do you go to chapel?” says one, “and not to church?” “Because my father and grandfather were dissenters.” Ask a churchman, very often, why he attends the establishment. “Well, our family were always brought up to it; that is why I go.” Now, I do think that the worst of all reasons for a particular religion, is that of our being brought up to it. I never could see that at all. I have attended the house of God with my father and my grandfather; but I thought, when I read the Scriptures, that it was my business to judge for myself. I knew that my father and my grandfather took little children in their arms, and put drops of water on their faces, and they were baptized. I took up my Bible, and I could not see any thing about babes being baptized. I picked up a little Greek; and I could not discover that the word “baptized” meant to sprinkle; so I said to myself, “Suppose they are good men, they may be wrong; and though I love and revere them, yet it is no reason why I should imitate them.” And therefore I left them, and became what I am to-day, a Baptist minister, so called, but I hope a great deal more a Christian than a Baptist. It is seldom I mention it; I only do so by way of illustration here. Many a one will go to chapel, because his grandmother did. Well, she was a good old soul, but I do not see

that she ought to influence your judgment. "That does not signify," says one, "I do not like to leave the church of my fathers." No more do I; I would rather belong to the same denomination with my father; I would not willfully differ from any of my friends, or leave their sect and denomination, but let God be above our parents; though our parents are at the very top of our hearts, and we love them and reverence them, and in all other matters pay them strict obedience, yet, with regard to religion, to our own Master we stand or fall, and we claim to have the right of judging for ourselves as men, and then we think it our duty, having judged, to carry out our convictions. Now I am not going to say, "If God be your mother's God, serve him;" though that would be a very good argument with some of you; but with you waverers, the only plea I use is, "If God be God, serve him;" if the gospel be right, believe it; if a religious life be right, carry it out; if not, give it up. I only put my argument on Elijah's plea—"If God be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." VI. And now I make my appeal to the halters and waverers, with some questions, which I pray the Lord to apply. Now I will put this question to them: "*How long halt ye?*" I will tell them; ye will halt between two opinions, all of you who are undecided, *until God shall answer by fire*. Fire was not what these poor people wanted that were assembled there. When Elijah says, that "the God that answereth by fire let him be God," I fancy I hear some of them saying, "No; the God that answereth by water let him be God; we want rain badly enough." "No," said Elijah, "if rain should come, you would say that it was the common course of providence; and that would not decide you." I tell you, all the providences that befall you undecided ones will not decide you. God may surround you with providences; he may surround you with frequent warnings from the death-bed of your fellows; but providences will never decide you. It is not the God of rain, but the God of fire that will do it. There are two ways in which you undecided ones will be decided by-and-by. You that are decided for God will want no decision; you that are decided for Satan will want no decision; you are on Satan's side, and must dwell for ever in eternal burning. But these undecided ones want something to decide them, and will have either one of the two things; they will either have the fire of God's Spirit to decide them, or else the fire of eternal judgment, and that will decide them. I may preach to you, my hearers; and all the ministers in the world may preach to you that are wavering, but you will never decide for God through the force of your own will. None of you, if left to your natural judgment, to the use of your own reason, will ever decide for God. You may decide for him merely as an outward form, but not as an inward spiritual thing, which should possess your heart as a Christian, as a believer in the doctrine of effectual grace. I know that none of you will ever decide for God's gospel, unless God decide you; and I tell you that you must either be decided by the descent of the fire of his Spirit into your hearts now, or else in the day of judgment. O! which shall it be? O! that the prayer might be put up by the thousand lips that are here: "Lord, decide me now by the fire of thy Spirit; O! let thy Spirit descend into my heart, to burn up the bullock, that I may be a whole burnt offering to God; to burn up the

wood and the stones of my sin; to burn up the very dust of worldliness; ah, and to lick up the water of my impiety, which now lieth in the trenches, and my cold indifference, that seek to put out the sacrifice.”

“O make this heart rejoice or ache!

Decide this doubt for me;

And if it be not broken, break,

And heal it, if it be.”

“O sovereign grace, my heart subdue;

I would be led in triumph too,

A willing captive to my Lord,

To sing the triumphs of his word.”

And it may be, that whilst I speak, the mighty fire, unseen by men, and unfelt by the vast majority of you, shall descend into some heart which has of old been dedicated to God by his divine election, which is now like an altar broken down, but which God, by his free grace, will this day build up. O! I pray that that influence may enter into some hearts, that there may be some go out of this place, saying,

“Tis done, the great transaction's done,

I am my Lord's, and he is mine;

He drew me, and I followed on,

Glad to obey the voice divine.”

Now rest my undivided heart, fixed on this stable center, rest.” O! that many may say that! But remember, if it be not so, the day is coming—*dies irae*, the day of wrath and anger—when ye shall be decided of God; when the firmament shall be lit up with lightnings, when the earth shall roll with drunken terror, when the pillars of the universe shall shake, and God shall sit, in the person of his Son, to judge the world in righteousness. You will not be undecided then, when, “Depart ye cursed,” or “Come, ye blessed,” shall be your doom. There will be no indecision then, when you shall meet him with joy or else with terror—when, “rocks hide me, mountains on me fall,” shall be your doleful shriek; or else your joyful song shall be, “The Lord is come.” In that day you will be decided; but till then, unless the living fire of the Holy Spirit decide you, you will go on halting between two opinions. May God grant you his Holy Spirit that you may turn unto him and be saved!

Presumptuous Sins

A Sermon

(No. 135)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 7, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.”—[Psalm 19:13](#).

ALL SINS are great sins, but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion, and is full of the essential marrow of traitorous rejection of God. But there be some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion, and which wear upon their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. It is wrong to suppose that because all sins will condemn us, that therefore one sin is not greater than another. The fact is, that while all transgression is a greatly grievous sinful thing, yet there are some transgressions which have a deeper shade of blackness, and a more double scarlet-dyed hue of criminality than others. Now the presumptuous sins of our text are just the chief of all sins: they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities. It is remarkable, that though an atonement was provided under the Jewish law for every kind of sin, there was this one exception: “But the soul that sinneth presumptuously shall have no atonement; it shall be out off from the midst of my people.” And now, under the Christian dispensation, although in the sacrifice of our blessed Lord there is a great and precious atonement for presumptuous sins, whereby sinners who have sinned in this manner are made clean, yet, without doubt, presumptuous sinners, dying without pardon, must expect to receive a double portion of the wrath of God, and a more wonderful manifestation of the unutterable anguish of the torment of eternal punishment in the pit that is digged for the wicked.

I shall this morning, first of all, endeavor to *describe presumptuous sins*; then, secondly, I shall try, if I can, to *show by some illustrations, why the presumptuous sin is more heinous than any other*; and then thirdly, I shall try to *press the prayer upon your notice*—the prayer, mark you, of the holy man—the prayer of David: “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.”

I. First, then, WHAT IS PRESUMPTUOUS SIN? Now, I think here must be one of four things in a sin in order to make it presumptuous. It must either be a sin against light and knowledge, or a sin committed with deliberation, or a sin committed with a design of sinning, merely for sinning’s sake, or else it must be a sin committed through hardihood, from a man’s rash confidence in his own strength. We will mark these points one by one.

1. A sin that is *committed willfully against manifest light and knowledge* is a presumptuous sin. A sin of ignorance is not presumptuous, unless that ignorance also be willful, in

which case the ignorance itself is a presumptuous sin. But when a man sins for want of knowing better—for want of knowing the law, for want of instruction, reproof, advice, and admonition, we say that his sin, so committed, does not partake to any great extent of the nature of a presumptuous sin. But when a man knows better, and sins in the very teeth and face of his increased light and knowledge, then his sin deserves to be branded with this ignominious title of a presumptuous sin. Let me just dwell on this thought a moment. *Conscience* is often an inner light to men, whereby they are warned of forbidden acts as being sinful. Then if I sin against conscience, though I have no greater light than conscience affords me, still my sin is presumptuous, if I have presumed to go against that voice of God in my heart, an enlightened conscience. You, young man, were once tempted (and perhaps it was but yesterday) to commit a certain act. The very moment you were tempted, conscience said, “It is wrong, it is wrong”—it shouted murder in your heart, and told you the deed you were about to commit was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Your fellow-apprentice committed the same sin without the warning of conscience; in him it was guilt—guilt which needs to be washed away with the Saviour’s blood. But it was not such guilt in him as it was in you, because your conscience checked you; your conscience told you of the danger, warned you of the punishment, and yet you dared to go astray against God, and therefore you sinned presumptuously. You have sinned very grievously in having done so. When a man shall trespass on my ground, he shall be a trespasser though he have no warning, but if straight before his face there stands a warning, and if he knowingly and willingly trespasses, then he is guilty of a presumptuous trespass, and is to be so far punished accordingly. So you, if you had not known better; if your conscience had been less enlightened, you might have committed the deed with far less of the criminality which now attaches to you, because you sinned against conscience, and consequently sinned presumptuously.

But, O! how much greater is the sin, when man not only has the light of conscience, but has also *the admonition of friends*, the advice of those who are wise and esteemed by him. If I have but one check, the check of my enlightened conscience, and I transgress against it, I am presumptuous; but if a mother with tearful eye warns me of the consequence of my guilt, and if a father with steady look, and with affectionate determined earnestness, tells me what will be the effect of my transgression—if friends who are dear to me counsel me to avoid the way of the wicked, and warn me what must be the inevitable result of continuing in it, then I am presumptuous, and my act in that very proportion becomes more guilty. I should have been presumptuous for having sinned against the light of nature, but I am more presumptuous when, added to that, I have the light of affectionate counsel and of kind advice, and therein I bring upon my head a double amount of divine wrath. And how much more is this the case, when the transgressor has been gifted with what is usually called a religious education; in childhood he has been lighted to his bed by the lamps of the sanctuary, the name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby, the music of the sanctuary woke him

like a matin hymn at morning; he has been dandled on the knee of piety and has sucked the breasts of godliness; he has been tutored and trained in the way he should go; how much more fearful I say, is the guilt of such a man than that of those who have never had such training, but have been left to follow their own wayward lusts and pleasures without the restraint of a holy education and the restraints of an enlightened conscience!

But, my friends, even this may become worse still. A man sins yet more presumptuously, *when he has had most special warning from the voice of God against sin*. “What mean you?” say you. Why, I mean this. You saw but yesterday a strong man in your neighborhood brought to the grave by sudden death; it is but a month ago that you heard the bell toll for one whom once, you knew and loved, who procrastinated and procrastinated until he perished in procrastination. You have had strange things happen in your very street, and the voice of God has been spoken loudly through the lips of Death to you. Ay, and you have had warnings too in your own body; you have been sick with fever, you have been brought to the jaws of the grave, and you have looked down into the bottomless vault of destruction. It is not long ago since you were given up; all said they might prepare a coffin for you, for your breath could not long be in your body. Then you turned your face to the wall, and prayed; you vowed that if God would spare you, you would live a godly life, that you would repent of your sins; but to your own confusion you are now just what you were. Ah! let me tell you, your guilt is more grievous than that of any other man, for you have sinned presumptuously, in the very highest sense in which you could have done so. You have sinned against reproofs, but what is worse still, you have sinned against your own solemn oaths and covenants, and against the promises that you made to God. He who plays with fire must be condemned as careless; but he who has been burned out once, and afterward plays with the destroying element, is worse, than careless; and he who has himself been scorched in the flame, and has had his locks all hot and crisp with the burning, if he again should rush headlong into fire, I say he is worse than careless, he is worse than presumptuous, he is mad. But I have some such here. They have had warnings so terrible that they might have known better; they have gone into lusts which have brought their bodies into sickness, and perhaps this day they have crept up to this house, and they dare not tell to their neighbor who stands by their side what is the loathsomeness that even now doth breed upon their frame. And yet they will go back to the same lusts; the fool will go again to the stocks, the sheep will lick the knife that is to slay him. You will go on in your lust and in your sins, despite warnings, despite advice, until you perish in your guilt. How worse than children are grown-up men! The child who goes for a merry slide upon a pond, if he be told that the ice will not bear him, starteth back affrighted, or if he daringly creepeth upon it how soon he leaves it, if he hears but a crack upon the slender covering of the water! But you men have conscience, which tells you that your sins are vile, and that they will be your ruin; you bear the crack of sin, as its thin sheet of pleasure gives way beneath your feet; ay, and some of you have seen

your comrades sink in the flood, and lost; and yet you go sliding on, worse than childish, worse than mad are you, thus presumptuously to play with your own everlasting state. O my God, how terrible is the presumption of some! How fearful is presumption in any! O! that we might be enabled to cry, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."

2. I said again, that another characteristic of a presumptuous sin was *deliberation*. A man, perhaps, may have a passionate spirit, and in a moment of hot haste he may utter an angry word of which in a few short minutes he will sincerely repent. A man may have a temper so hot that the least provocation causes him at once to be full of wrath. But he may also have a temperament which has this benefit to balance it, that he very soon learns to forgive, and cools in a moment. Now, such a man does not sin presumptuously, when suddenly overcome by anger, though, without doubt, there is presumption in his sin, unless he strives to correct that passion and keep it down. A man, again, who is suddenly tempted and surprised into a sin which is not his habit, but which he commits through the force of some strong temptation, is guilty, but not guilty of presumption, because he was taken unawares in the net and caught in the snare. But there are other men who sin deliberately; there are some who can think of a lust for weeks beforehand and dote upon their darling crime with pleasure. They do, as it were, water the young seedling of lust until it grows to the maturity of desire, and then they go and commit the crime. There are some to whom lust is not a passer-by, but a lodger at home. They receive it, they house it, they feast it; and when they sin they sin deliberately, walk coolly to their lusts, and in cold blood commit the act which another might haply do in hot and furious haste. Now, such a sin has in it a great extent of sinfulness, it is a sin of high presumption. To be carried away, as by a whirlwind of passion, in a moment is wrong; but to sit down and deliberately resolve upon revenge is cursed and diabolical. To sit down and deliberately fashion schemes of wickedness is heinous, and I can find no other word fitly to express it. To deliberate carefully how the crime is to be done, and, Haman-like, to build the gallows, and to set to work to destroy one's neighbor, to get the pit digged that the friend may fall into it and be destroyed, to lay snares in secret, to plot wickedness upon one's bed—this is a high pitch of presumptuous sin. May God forgive any of us, if we have been so far guilty!

Again, *when a man continues long in sin, and has time to deliberate about it*, that also is a proof that it is a presumptuous sin. He that sins once, being overtaken in a fault, and then abhors the sin, has not sinned presumptuously; but he who transgresses to-day, to-morrow, and the next day, week after week, and year after year, until he has piled up a heap of sins that are high as a mountain, such a man, I say, sins presumptuously, because in a continued habit of sin there must be a deliberation to sin; there must be at least such a force and strength of mind as could not have come upon any man if his sin were but the hasty effect of sudden passion. Ah! take heed, ye that are sodden in sin, ye that drink it down as the greedy ox drinketh down water, ye who run to your lust as the rivers run to the sea, and

ye who go to your passions as the sow to her wallowing in the mire. Take heed! your crimes are grievous, and the hand of God shall soon fall terribly on your heads, unless by divine grace it be granted to you to repent and turn unto him. Fearful must be your doom if unpardoned, God should condemn you for presumptuous sin. O “Lord, keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sin.”

3. Again: I said that a presumptuous sin must be a *matter of design*, and have been committed with the intention of sin. If at your leisure at home you will turn to that passage in the book of Numbers, where it says there is no pardon for a presumptuous sin under the Jewish dispensation, you will find immediately afterward a case recorded. A man went out on the Sabbath-day to gather sticks; he was taken in the act of Sabbath-breaking, and the law being very stringent under the Jewish dispensation, he was ordered at once to be put to death. Now, the reason why he was put to death was not because he gathered sticks on the Sabbath merely, but because the law had just then been proclaimed, “In it thou shalt do no manner of work.” This man willfully, out of design, in order, as it were, to show that he despised God—to show that he did not care for God—without any necessity, without any hope of advantage, went straight out, in the very teeth of the law, to perform, not an act which he kept in his own house, which might perhaps have been overlooked, but an act which brought shame upon the whole congregation, because, infidel-like, he dared to brazen it out before God; as much as to say, “I care not for God. Has God just commanded, ‘Ye shall do no manner of work?’ Here am I; I do not want sticks to-day; I do not want to work; not for the sake of sticks, but with the design of showing that I despise God, I go out this day and gather sticks.” “Now,” says one, “surely there are no people in the world that have ever done such a thing as this.” Yes, there are; and there are such in the Surrey Music Hall this day. They have sinned against God, not merely for the pleasure of it, but because they would show their want of reverence to God. That young man burned his Bible in the midst of his wicked companions—not because he hated his Bible, for he quivered and looked pale at the ashes on the hearth when he was doing it; but he did it out of pure bravado, in order to show them, as he thought, that he really was far gone from any thing like a profession of religion. That other man is accustomed sometimes to stand by the wayside, when the people are going to the house of God; and he swears at them, not because he delights in swearing, but because he will show that he is irreligious, that he is ungodly. How many an infidel has done the same—not because he had any pleasure in the thing itself, but because out of the wickedness of his heart he would spit at God, if it were possible, having a design to let men know that though the sin itself was cheap enough, he was determined to do something which would be like spitting in the face of his Maker, and despising God who created him! Now, such a sin is a masterpiece of iniquity. There is pardon for such a one—there is full pardon to those who are brought to repentance; but few of such men ever receive it; for when they are so far gone as to sin presumptuously, because they *will* do it—to sin merely for the sake

of showing their disregard of God and of God's law, we say of such, there is pardon for them, but it is wondrous grace which brings them into such a condition that they are willing, to accept it. O that God would keep back his servants here from presumptuous sins! And if any of us here have committed them, may he bring us back, to the praise of the glory of his grace!

4. But one more point, and I think I shall have explained these presumptuous sins. A presumptuous sin also is one that is committed *through a hardihood of fancied strength of mind*. Says one, "I intend to-morrow to go into such-and-such a society, because I believe, though it hurts other people, it does me no hurt." You turn round and say to some young man, "I could not advise you to frequent the Casino—it would be your ruin." But you go yourself sir? "Yes." But how do you justify yourself? Because I have such strength of principle that I know just how far to go, and no further. Thou liest, sir; against thyself thou liest; thou liest presumptuously in so doing. Thou art playing with bombshells that shall burst and destroy thee; thou art sitting over the mouth of hell with a fancy that thou shalt not be burned. Because thou hast gone to haunts of vice and come back tainted, much tainted, but because thou art so blind as not to see the taint, thou thinkest thyself secure. Thou art not so. Thy sin, in daring to think that thou art proof against sin, is a sin of presumption. "No, no," says one; "but I know that I can go just so far in such-and-such a sin, and there I can stop." Presumption, sir; nothing but presumption. It would be presumption for any man to climb to the top of the spire of a church, and stand upon his head. "Well, but he might come down safe, if he were skilled in it." Yes, but it is presumptuous. I would no more think of subscribing a farthing to a man's ascent in a balloon, than I would to a poor wretch cutting his own throat. I would no more think of standing and gazing at any man who puts his life in a position of peril, than I would of paying a man to blow his brains out. I think such things, if not murders, are murderous. There is suicide in men risking themselves in that way; and if there be suicide in the risk of the body, how much more in the case of a man who puts his own soul in jeopardy just because he thinks he has strength of mind enough to prevent its being ruined and destroyed. Sir, your sin is a sin of presumption; it is a great and grievous one; it is one of the masterpieces of iniquity.

O! how many people there are who are sinning presumptuously to-day! You are sinning presumptuously in being to-day what you are. You are saying, "In a little time I will solemnly and seriously think of religion, In a few years, when I am a little more settled in life, I intend to turn over a new leaf, and think about the matters of godliness." Sir, you are presumptuous. You are presuming that you shall live; you are speculating upon a thing which is as frail as the bubble on the breaker; you are staking your everlasting soul on the deadly odds that you shall live for a few years, whereas, the probabilities are, that you may be cut down ere the sun shall set: and it is possible, that ere another year shall have passed over your head, you may be in the land where repentance is impossible, and useless were it possible. O! dear

friends, procrastination is a presumptuous sin. The putting off a thing which should be done to-day, because you hope to live to-morrow, is a presumption. You have no right to do it—you are, in so doing, sinning against God, and bringing on your heads the guilt of presumptuous sin. I remember that striking passage in Jonathan Edwards' wonderful sermon, which was the means of a great revival, where he says, "Sinner, thou art this moment standing over the mouth of hell, upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten; thou art hanging over the jaws of perdition, by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are creaking now." It is a terrible thing to be in such a position as that, and yet to say, "to-morrow," and to procrastinate. You remind me, some of you, of that story of Dionysius the tyrant, who, wishing to punish one who had displeased him, invited him to a noble feast. Rich were the viands that were spread upon the table, and rare the wines of which he was invited to drink. A chair was placed at the head of the table, and the guest was seated within it. Horror of horrors! The feast might be rich, but the guest was miserable, dreadful beyond thought. However splendid might be the array of the servants, and however rich the dainties, yet he who had been invited sat there in agony. For what reason? Because over his head, immediately over it, there hung a sword, a furbished sword, suspended by a single hair. He had to sit all the time with this sword above him, with nothing but a hair between him and death. You may conceive the poor man's misery. He could not escape; he must sit where he was. How could he feast? How could he rejoice? But O, my unconverted hearer, thou art there this morning, man, with all thy riches and thy wealth before thee, with the comforts of a home and the joys of a household; thou art there this day, in a place from which thou canst not escape; the sword of death above thee, prepared to descend; and woe unto thee, when it shall cleave thy soul from thy body! Canst thou yet make mirth, and yet procrastinate? If thou canst, then verily thy sin is presumptuous in a high degree. "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, with which I shall deal very briefly. I am to try and show WHY IT IS THAT THERE IS GREAT ENORMITY IN A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN.

Let me take any one of the sins; for instance, *the sin against light and knowledge*. There is greater enormity in such a presumptuous sin than in any other. In this our happy land it is just possible for a man to commit treason. I think it must be rather difficult for him to do it; for we are allowed to say words here which would have brought our necks beneath the guillotine if they had been spoken on the other side the Channel; and we are allowed to do deeds here which would have brought us long years of imprisonment if the deed had been done in any other land. But I suppose it is just possible to commit treason here. Now, if two men should commit treason—if one of them should wantonly and wickedly raise the standard of revolt to-morrow, should denounce the rightful sovereign of this land in the strongest and most abominable language, should seek to entice the loyal subject of this

country from their allegiance, and should draw some of them astray, to the hurt and injury of the common weal; he might have in his rebellious ranks one who had joined incautiously, not knowing whereunto the matter might tend, who might come into the midst of the rebels, not understanding the intention of their unlawful assembling, not even knowing the law which prohibited them from being banded together, I can suppose these two men brought up upon a charge of high treason: they have both, legally, been guilty of it; but I can suppose that the one man who had sinned ignorantly would be acquitted, because there was no malignant intent; and I can suppose that the other man, who had willfully, knowingly, maliciously and wickedly raised the standard of revolt, would receive the highest punishment which the law could demand. And why? Because in the one case it was a sin of presumption, and in the other case it was not so. In the one case the man dared to defy the sovereign, and defy the law of the land, willfully, out of mere presumption. In the other case not so. Now, every man sees that it would be just to make a distinction in the punishment, because there is—conscience itself tells us—a distinction in the guilt.

Again: some men, I have said, sin *deliberately*, and others do not do so. Now, in order to show that there is a distinction here, let me take a case. To-morrow the bench of magistrates are sitting. Two men are brought up. They are each of them charged with stealing a loaf of bread. It is clearly proved, in the one case, that the man was hungry, and that he snatched the loaf of bread to satisfy his necessities. He is sorry for his deed, he grieves that he has done this act; but most manifestly he had a strong temptation to it. In the other case the man was rich, and he willfully went into the shop merely because he would break the law and show that he was a law-breaker. He said to the policeman outside, “Now, I care neither for you nor the law; I intend to go in there, just to see what you can do with me.” I can suppose the magistrate would say to one man, “You are discharged; take care not to do the like again; there is something for your present necessities; seek to earn an honest living.” But to the other I can conceive him saying, “You are an infamous wretch; you have committed the same deed as the other, but from very different motives; I give you the longest term of imprisonment which the law allows me, and I can only regret that I can not treat you worse than I have done.” The presumption of sin made the difference. So when you sin deliberately and knowingly, your sin against Almighty God is a higher and a blacker sin than it would have been if you had sinned ignorantly, or sinned in haste.

Now let us suppose one more case. In the heat of some little dispute some one shall insult a man. You shall be insulted by a man of angry temper; you have not provoked him, you gave him no just cause for it; but at the same time he was of a hot and angry disposition; he was somewhat foiled in the debate, and he insulted you, calling you by some name which has left a stain upon your character, so far as epithets can do it. I can suppose that you would ask no reparation of him, if by to-morrow you saw that it was just a rash word spoken in haste, of which he repented. But suppose another person should waylay you in the street,

should week after week seek to meet you in the market-place, and should, after a great deal of toil and trouble, at last meet you, and there, in the center of a number of people, unprovoked, just out of sheer, deliberate malice, come before you and call you a liar in the street; I can suppose that, Christian as you are, you might find it necessary to chastise such insolence, not with your hand, but with the arm of that equitable law which protects us all from insulting violence. In the other case I can suppose it would be no trouble to forgive. You would say, "My dear fellow, I know we are all hasty sometimes—there, now, I don't care at all for it; you did not mean it." But in this case, where a man has dared and defied you without any provocation whatever, you would say to him, "Sir, you have endeavored to injure me in respectable society; I can forgive you as a Christian, but as a man and a citizen I shall demand that I am protected against your insolence."

You see, therefore, in the cases that occur between man and man, how there is an excess of guilt added to a sin by presumption. O! ye that have sinned presumptuously—and who among us has not done so?—bow your heads in silence, confess your guilt, and then open your mouths, and cry, "Lord have mercy upon me, a presumptuous sinner."

III. And now I have nearly done—not to weary you by too long a discourse—we shall notice THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THIS PRAYER—"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."

Will you just note, that this prayer was the *prayer of a saint*, the prayer of a holy man of God? Did David need to pray thus? Did the "man after God's own heart" need to cry, "Keep back thy servant?" Yes, he did. And note the beauty of the prayer. If I might translate it into more metaphorical style, it is like this: "Curb thy servant from presumptuous sin." "Keep him back or he will wander to the edge of the precipice of sin. Hold him in, Lord; he is apt to run away; curb him; put the bridle on him; do not let him do it; let thine overpowering grace keep him holy; when he would do evil, then do thou draw him to good, and when his evil propensities would lead him astray, then do thou check him." "Check thy servant from presumptuous sins."

What then? Is It true that the best of men may sin presumptuously? Ah! it is true. It is a solemn thing to find the Apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome of sins. He says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, inordinate affection," and such like. What! do saints want warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The highest saints may sin the lowest sins, unless kept by divine grace. You old experienced Christians, boast not in your experience; you may trip yet, unless you cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." Ye whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not "I shall never sin," but rather cry out, "Lord, lead me not into temptation, and when there leave me not there; for unless thou hold me fast I feel I must, I shall decline, and prove an apostate after all." There is enough tinder in the hearts of the best men in the world to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell, unless

God should quench the sparks as they fall. There is enough corruption, depravity, and wickedness in the heart of the most holy man that is now alive to damn his soul to all eternity, if free and sovereign grace does not prevent. O Christian, thou hast need to pray this prayer. But I think I hear you saying, "Is thy servant a dog, that I should do this thing?" So said Hazeal, when the prophet told him that he would slay his master; but he went home and took a wet cloth and spread it over his master's face and choked him, and did the next day the sin which he abhorred before. Think it not enough to abhor sin, you may yet fall into it. Say not, "I never can be drunken, for I have such an abhorrence of drunkenness;" thou mayest fall where thou art most secure. Say not, "I can never blaspheme God, for I have never done so in my life;" take care; you may yet swear most profanely. Job might have said, "I will never curse the day of my birth;" but he lived to do it. He was a patient man; he might have said, "I will never murmur; though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and yet he lived to wish that the day were darkness wherein he was brought forth. Boast not, then, O Christian; by faith thou standest. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

But if this need to be the prayer of the best, how ought it to be the prayer of you and me? If the highest saint must pray it, O mere moralist, thou hast good need to utter it. And ye who have begun to sin, who make no pretensions to piety, how much need is there for you to pray that you may be kept from presumptuously rebelling against God.

Instead, however, of enlarging upon that point, I shall close my few remarks this morning by just addressing myself most affectionately to such of you as are now under a sense of guilt by reason of presumptuous sins. God's Spirit has found some of you out this morning. I thought when I was describing presumptuous sin that I saw here and there an eye that was suffused with tears; I thought I saw here and there a head that was bowed down, as much as to say, "I am guilty there." I thought there were some hearts that palpitated with confession, when I described the guilt of presumption. I hope it was so. If it was I am glad of it. If I hit your consciences, it was that I meant to do. Not to your ears do I speak, but to your hearts. I would not give the snap of this my finger to gratify you with mere words of oratory, with a mere flow of language. No, God is my witness. I never sought effect yet, except the effect of hitting your consciences. I would use the words that would be most rough and vulgar in all our language, if I could get at your heart better with them than with any other; for I reckon that the chief matter with a minister is to touch the conscience. If any of you feel, then, that you have presumed against God in sinning, let me just bid you look at your sin, and weep over the blackness of it; let me exhort you to go home and bow your heads with sorrow, and confess your guilt, and weep over it with many tears and sighs. You have greatly sinned, and if God should blast you into perdition now, he would be just; if now his fiery thunderbolt of vengeance should pierce you through, if the arrow that is now upon the string of the Almighty should find a target in your heart, he would be just. Go home

and confess that, confess it with cries and sighs. And then what next wilt thou do? Why, I bid thee remember that there was a man who was a God. That man suffered for presumptuous sin. I would bid thee this day, sinner, if thou knowest thy need of a Saviour, go up to thy chamber, cast thyself upon thy face, and weep for sin; and when thou hast done that, turn to the Scriptures, and read the story of that man who suffered and died for sin. Think you see him in all his unutterable agonies, and griefs, and woes, and say this—

“My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.”
Lift up your hand, and put it on his head who bled, and say,
“My faith would lay its hand
On that dear head of thine,
While, like a penitent, I stand,
And there confess my sin.”

Sit down at the foot of his cross, and watch him till your heart is moved, till the tears begin to flow again, until your heart breaks within you; and then you will rise and say—

“Dissolved by his mercy, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found.”

O sinner, thou canst never perish, if thou wilt cast thyself at the foot of the cross. If thou seekest to save thyself thou shalt die; if thou wilt come, just as thou art, all black, all filthy, all hell-deserving, all ill-deserving, I am my Master’s hostage, I will be answerable at the day of judgment for this matter, if he does not save thee, I can preach on this subject now, for I trust I have tried my Master myself. As a youth I sinned, as a child I rebelled, as a young man I wandered into lusts and vanities: my Master made me feel how great a sinner I was and I sought to reform, to mend the matter; but I grew worse. At last I heard it said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;” and I looked to Jesus. And O! my Saviour, thou hast eased my aching conscience, thou hast given me peace; thou hast enabled me to say#151;

“Now, freed from sin I walk at large;
My Saviour’s blood’s a full discharge
At his dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay.”

And O! my heart pants for you. O that you who never knew him could taste his love now. O that you who have never repented might now receive the Holy Ghost who is able to melt the heart! And O that you who are penitents would look to him now! And I repeat that solemn assertion—I am God’s hostage this morning; ye shall feed me on bread and water to my life’s end, ay, and I will bear the blame for ever, if any of you seek Christ and

Christ rejects you. It must not, it can not be. "Whosoever cometh," he says, "I will in no wise cast out." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." May God Almighty bless you; and may we meet again in yonder Paradise; and there will we sing more sweetly of redeeming love and dying blood, and of Jesus' power to save#151;

 "When this poor lispings, stammering tongue
 Lies silent in the grave."

Israel in Egypt

A Sermon

(No. 136)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 14, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And they sang the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”—[Revelation 15:3](#).

AT THE OUTSET, let us remark the carefulness of the Holy Spirit in guarding the honor of our blessed Lord. This verse is often quoted as if it runs thus—“They sang the song of Moses and the Lamb.” This mistake has led many weak minds to wonder at the expression, for they have imagined that it divided the honor of the song of heaven between Moses and the Redeemer. The clause—“the servant of God”—is doubtless inserted by the Holy Spirit to prevent any error upon this point, and therefore it should be carefully included in the quotation. I take it that the song of Moses is here united with the song of the Lamb, because the one was a type and picture of the other. The glorious overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea shadowed forth the total destruction of Satan and all his host in the day of the great battle of the Lord; and there was in the song of Moses the expression of the same feelings of triumph which will pervade the breasts of the redeemed when they shall triumph with their Captain.

May God the Holy Spirit enable me to *exhibit the parallel which exists between the condition of Israel when passing through the sea, and the position of the church of Christ at the present day*. Next, we shall *compare the triumph of the Lord at the Red Sea with the victory of the Lamb in the great and terrible day of the Lord*. And lastly, I shall *point out certain prominent features of the song of Moses, which will doubtless be as prominent in the song of the Lamb*.

I. First, it is our business to regard THE POSITION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS EMBLEMATICAL OF OUR OWN. And here we observe that, like the church of God, the vast host of Israel had been delivered from bondage. We, my brethren, who constitute a part of the Israel of God, were once the slaves of sin and Satan; we served with hard bondage and rigor while in our natural state; no bondage was ever more terrible than ours; we indeed made bricks without straw, and labored in the very fire; but by the strong hand of God we have been delivered. We have come forth from the prison-house; with joy we beheld ourselves emancipated—the Lord’s free men. The iron yoke is taken from our necks; we no longer serve our lusts, and pay obedience to the tyrant sin. With a high hand and an

outstretched arm, our God has led us forth from the place of our captivity, and joyfully we pursue our way through the wilderness.

But with the children of Israel it was not all joy; they were free, but their master was at their heels. Pharaoh was loth to lose so valuable a nation of servants; and therefore with his chosen captains, his horsemen, and his chariots, he pursued them in angry haste. Affrighted Israel beheld her infuriated oppressor close at her rear, and trembled for the issue—the hearts of the people failed them while they saw their hopes blighted and their joys ended by the approach of the oppressor; even so it is with some of you; you think you must be driven back again like dumb cattle, into Egypt, and once more become what you were. “Surely,” you say, “I can not hold on my way with such a host seeking to drive me back; I must again become the slave of my iniquities.” And thus dreading apostacy, and feeling that you would rather die than become what you were, you this morning are filled with trepidation. You are saying, “Alas for me! Better that I had died in Egypt than that I should have come out into this wilderness to be again captured.” You have tasted for a moment the joys of holiness and the sweets of liberty; and now again to go back to endure the bondage of a spiritual Egypt, would be worse than before. This is the position of the sacramental host of God’s elect; they have come out of Egypt, and they are pursuing their way to Canaan. But the world is against them; the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his people, saying, “Let us scatter them; let us utterly destroy them.” From the fiery days of the stakes of Smithfield even until now, the world’s black heart has hated the church, and the world’s cruel hand and laughing lip have been for ever against us. The host of the mighty are pursuing us, and are thirsty for our blood, and anxious to cut us off from the earth. Such is our position unto this hour, and such must it be until we are landed on the other side of Jordan, and until our Maker comes to reign on the earth.

But once more: the children of Israel were in a position more wonderful than this. They came to the edge of the Red Sea; they feared their enemies behind; they could not fly on either hand, for they were flanked by mountains and stupendous rocks; one course only was open to them, and that course was through the sea. God commands them to go forward. The rod of Moses is outstretched, and the affrighted waters divide; a channel is left while the floods stand up right, and the waters are congealed in the heart of the sea. The priests, bearing the ark, march forward; the whole host of Israel follow. And now behold the wondrous pilgrimage. A wall of alabaster is on either side, and myriads are in the pebbly depths. Like a wall of glass the sea stands on either side of them, frowning with beetling cliffs of foam; but still on they march; and until the last of God’s Israel is safe the water stands still and firm, frozen by the lips of God. Such, my hearers, is the position of God’s church now. You and I are marching through a sea, the floods of which are kept upright only by the sovereign power of God. This world is a world which is suddenly to be destroyed; and our position in it is just the position of the children of Israel, for whose sake the floods refused

to meet until they were safely landed. O church of God! thou art the salt of the earth: when thou art removed this earth must putrify and decay. O living army of the living God! ye, like Israel, keep the floods of providence still standing fast; but when the last of you shall be gone from this stage of action, God's fiery wrath and tremendous anger shall dash down upon the ground whereon you now are standing, and your enemies shall be overwhelmed in the place through which you now walk safely. Let me put my thoughts as plainly as I can. Naturally, according to the common order, the Red Sea should have flowed on in a level and even manner, constant in its waves, and unbroken in its surface. By the might of God the Red Sea was divided into two parts, and the floods stood back. Now mark. Naturally, according to the common course of justice, this world, which groaneth and travaileth until now, ought, if we only consider the wicked, to be utterly destroyed. The only reason why the Red Sea afforded a safe passage for the host was this—that Israel marched through it; and the only reason why this world stands, and the only reason why it is not destroyed by fire, as it is to be at the last great day, is because God's Israel are in it; but when once they shall have passed through, the parted floods shall meet their hands, and embrace with eager joy to clasp the adverse host within their arms. The day is coming when this world shall reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man. Every Christian may say, with due reverence to God, "The earth is dissolved; I bear up the pillars thereof." Let all the Christians that are in the world die, and the pillars of the earth would fall, and like a wreck and a vision all this universe of ours would pass away, never to be seen again. We are to-day, I say, passing through the floods, with enemies behind, pursuing us who are going out of Egypt up to Canaan.

III. And now the TRIUMPH OF MOSES was a picture of the ultimate triumph of the Lamb. Moses sang a song unto the Lord by the sea of Egypt. If you will turn to holy Scripture you will find that my text was sung by the holy spirits who had been preserved from sin and from the contamination of the beast; and it is said that they sung this song upon "a sea of glass mingled with fire." Now the song of Moses was sung by the side of a sea, which was glassy, and still; for a little season the floods had been disturbed, divided, separated, congealed, but in a few moments afterward, when Israel had safely passed the flood, they became as glassy as ever, for the enemy had sunken to the bottom like a stone, and the sea re. turned to its strength when the morning appeared. Is there ever a time, then, when this great sea of Providence, which now stands parted to give a passage to God's saints shall become a level surface? Is there a day when the now divided dispensations of God, which are kept from following out their legitimate tendency to do justice upon sin—when the two seas of justice shall commingle, and the one sea of God's providence shall be "a sea of glass mingled with fire?" Yes, the day is drawing nigh when God's enemies shall no longer make it necessary for God's providence to be apparently disturbed to save his people, when the great designs of God shall be accomplished, and therefore when the walls of water shall roll together,

while in their inmost depths the everlasting burning fire shall still consume the wicked. O, the sea shall be calm upon the surface; the sea upon which God's people shall walk shall seem to be a sea that is clear, without a weed, without an impurity; while down in its hollow bosom, far beyond all mortal ken, shall be the horrid depths where the wicked must for ever dwell in the fire which is mingled with the glass.

Well, I now want to show you why it was that Moses triumphed, and why it is that by-and-by we shall triumph. One reason why Moses sung his song was because *all* Israel were safe. They were all safely across the sea. Not a drop of spray fell from that solid wall until the last of God's Israel had safely planted his foot on the other side of the flood. That done, immediately the floods dissolved into their proper place again, but not till then. Part of that song was, "Thou hast led thy people like a flock through the wilderness." Now, in the last time, when Christ shall come upon earth, the great song will be—"Lord, thou hast saved thy people; thou hast led them all safely through the paths of providence, and not one of them has fallen into the hands of the enemy." O, it is my strong belief, that in heaven there shall not be a vacant throne. I rejoice that all who love the Lord below, must at last attain to heaven. I do not believe with some that men may start on the road to heaven, and be saved, and yet fall by the hand of the enemy. God forbid, my friends!

"All the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his glories known."

Part of the triumph of heaven will be, that there is not one throne that is unoccupied. As many as God hath chosen, as many as Christ hath redeemed, as many as the Spirit hath called, as many as believe, shall arrive safe across the stream. We are not all safely landed yet:

"Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."
The vanguard of the army have already reached the shore. I see them yonder;
"I greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon th' eternal shore."

And you and I, my brethren, are marching through the depths. We are at this day following hard after Christ, and walking through the wilderness. Let us be of good cheer: the rearguard shall soon be where the vanguard already is; the last of the chosen shall soon have landed; the last of God's elect shall have crossed the sea, and then shall be heard the song of triumph, when all are secure. But O! if one were absent—oh! if one of his chosen family should be cast away—it would make an everlasting discord in the song of the redeemed, and cut the strings of the harps of Paradise, so that music could never be distilled from them again.

But, perhaps, the major part of the joy of Moses lay in the destruction of all the enemies of God. He looked upon his people the day before.

“He looked upon his people,
And the tear was in his eye;
He looked upon the foeman
And his glance was stern and high.”

And now to-day he looks upon his people, and he says, “Blessed art thou, O Israel, safely landed on the shore;” and he looks not upon the foeman, but upon the foeman’s tomb; he looks where the living were protected by the shield of God from all their enemies; and he sees—what? A mighty sepulcher of water; a mighty tomb in which were engulfed princes, monarchs, potentates. “The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” Pharaoh’s chariots also are drowned therein. And soon, my hearers, you and I shall do the same. I say that now we have to look abroad on hosts of enemies. What with the wild beasts of Rome, what with the antichrist of Mohammed, what with the thousands of idolatries and false gods, what with infidelity in all its myriad shapes, many are the enemies of God, and mighty are the hosts of hell. Lo, you see them gathered together this day; horseman upon horseman, chariot upon chariot, gathered together against the Most High. I see the trembling church, fearing to be over-thrown; I mark her leaders bending their knees in solemn prayer, and crying, “Lord, save thy people, and bless thy heritage.” But mine eye looks through the future with telescopic glance, and I see the happy period of the latter days, when Christ shall reign triumphant. I shall ask them where is Babel? where is Rome? where is Mohammed? and the answer shall come—where? Why they have sunk into the depths; they have sunk to the bottom as a stone. Down there the horrid fire devours them, for the sea of glass is mingled with the fire of judgment. To-day I see a battle-field; the whole earth is torn by the hoofs of horses; there is the rumble of cannon and the roll of drum. “To arms! to arms!” both hosts are shouting. But you wait awhile, and you shall walk across this plain of battle, and say, “Seest thou that colossal system of error dead? There lies another, all frozen, in ghastly death, in motionless stupor. There lieth infidelity; there sleepeth secularism and the secularist; there lie those who defied God. I see all this vast host of rebels lying scattered upon the earth. “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; Jehovah has gotten unto himself the victory, and the last of his enemies are destroyed.” Then shall be the time when shall be sung “the song of Moses and of the Lamb.”

III. Now, turning to the song of Moses, I shall conclude my address to you by noticing some interesting particulars in the song which will doubtless have a place in the everlasting orchestra of the redeemed, when they shall praise the Most High. O! my brethren, I could but wish that I had stood by the Red Sea, to have heard that mighty shout, and that tremendous roar of acclamation! Methinks one might well have borne a servitude in Egypt, to have stood in that mighty host who sung such mighty praise. Music hath charms; but never had

it such charms as it had that day when fair Miriam led the women, and Moses led the men, like some mighty leader, beating time with his hand. "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done gloriously." Methinks I see the scene; and I anticipate the greater day, when the song shall be sung again, "as the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

Now, just notice this song. In the 15th chapter of Exodus you find it, and in divers of the Psalms you will see it amplified. The first thing I would have you notice in it is, that from beginning to end it is a *praise of God*, and of nobody else but God. Moses, thou hast said nothing of thyself. O great lawgiver, mightiest of men, did not thine hand grasp the mighty rod that split the sea—that burned its fair breast, and left a sear for awhile upon its bosom? Didst not thou lead the hosts of Israel? Didst not thou marshal their thousands for battle, and like a mighty commander led them through the depths? Is there not a word for thee? Not one. The whole strain of the song is, "I will sing unto the Lord," from beginning to end. It is all praise of Jehovah; there is not one word about Moses, nor a single word in praise of the children of Israel. Dear friends, the last song in this world, the song of triumph, shall be full of God, and of no one else. Here you praise the instrument; to-day you look on this man and on that, and you say, "Thank God for this minister, and for this man?" To-day you say, "Blessed be God for Luther, who shook the Vatican, and thank God for Whitefield, who stirred up a slumbering church;" but in that day you shall not sing of Luther, nor of Whitefield, nor of any of the mighty ones of God's hosts; forgotten shall their names be for a season, even as the stars refuse to shine when the sun himself appeareth. The song shall be unto Jehovah, and Jehovah only; we shall not have a word to say for preachers nor bishops, not a syllable to say for good men and true; but the whole song from first to last shall be, "unto him that loved us and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And next will you please to note, that this song celebrated something of *the fierceness of the enemy!* Do you observe how, when the songster describes the attack of Pharaoh, he says, "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." A song is made out of the wrath of Pharaoh. And it shall be so at the last. "The wrath of man shall praise God. I believe the last song of the redeemed, when they shall ultimately triumph, will celebrate in heavenly stanzas the wrath of man overcome by God. Sometimes after great battles, monuments are raised to the memory of the fight; and of what are they composed? They are composed of weapons of death and of instruments of war which have been taken from the enemy. Now, to use that illustration as I think it may be properly used, the day is coming when fury, and wrath, and hatred, and strife, shall all be woven into a song; and the weapons of our enemies, when taken from them, shall serve to make monuments to the praise of God. Rail on, rail on, blasphemers! Smite on, smite on, tyrant! Lift thy heavy hand, O despot; crush the truth, which yet thou canst not crush; knock from his head the crown—the crown

that is far above thy reach—poor puny impotent mortal as thou art! Go on, go on! But all thou doest shall but increase his glories. For aught we care, we bid you still proceed with all your wrath and malice. Though it shall be worse for you, it shall be more glorious for our Master; the greater your preparations for war, the more splendid shall be his triumphal chariot, when he shall ride through the streets of heaven in pompous array. The more mighty your preparations for battle, the more rich the spoil which he shall divide with the strong. O! Christian, fear not the foe! Remember the harder his blows, the sweeter thy song; the greater his wrath, the more splendid thy triumph; the more he rages, the more shall Christ be honored in the day of his appearing. They sung the song of ‘Moses and the Lamb.

And then will ye note, in the next place, how they sang *the total overthrow* of the enemy. There is one expression in this song, which ought to be and I believe is, when set to music, very frequently repeated. It is that part of the song, as recorded in the Psalms, where it is declared that the whole host of Pharaoh were utterly destroyed, and there was not one of them left. When that great song was sung by the side of the Red Sea, there was, no doubt, a special emphasis laid upon that expression, “not one.” I think I hear the hosts of Israel. When the words were known by them, they began and they proceeded thus—“There is not one of them left;” and then in various parts the words were repeated, “Not one, not one.” And then the women with their sweet voices sang, “Not one, not one.” I believe that at the last, a part of our triumph will be the fact, that there is not one left. We shall look abroad throughout the earth, and see it all a level sea; and not one foeman pursuing us—“not one, not one!” Raise thyself never so high, O thou deceiver, thou canst not live; for not one shall escape. Lift thy head never so proudly, O despot, thou canst not live; for not one shall escape. O heir of heaven, not one sin shall cross the Jordan after thee; not one shall pass the Red Sea to overtake thee; but this shall be the summit of thy triumph—“Not one, not one! not one of them is left.”

Just let us note again, and I will not detain you too long, lest I weary you. One part of the song of Moses consisted in praising the ease with which God destroyed his enemies. “Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” If we had gone to work to destroy the hosts of Pharaoh, what a multitude of engines of death should we have required. If the work had been committed to us, to cut off the hosts, what marvelous preparations, what thunder, what noise, what great activity there would have been. But mark the grandeur of the expression. God did not even lift himself from his throne to do it: he saw Pharaoh coming; he seemed to look upon him with a placid smile; he did just blow with his lips, and the sea covered them. You and I will marvel at the last how easy it has been to over-throw the enemies of the Lord.. We have been tugging and toiling all our life-time to be the means of overthrowing systems of error; it will astonish the church, when her Master shall come, to see how, as the ice dissolveth before the fire, all error and sin shall be utterly destroyed in the coming of the Most High. We must have our

societies and our machinery, our preachings and our gatherings, and rightly too; but God will not require them at the last. The destruction of his enemies shall be as easy to him as the making of a world. In passive silence unmoved he sat; and he did but break the silence with "Let there be light; and light was." So shall he at the last, when his enemies are raging furiously, blow with his winds, and they shall be scattered; they shall melt even as wax, and shall be burned like tow; they shall be as the fat of rams; into smoke shall they consume, yea, into smoke shall they consume away.

Furthermore, in this song of Moses, you will notice there is one peculiar beauty. Moses not only rejoiced for what had been done, but for the future consequences of it. He says—"The people of Canaan, whom we are about to attack, will now be seized with sudden fear; by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone." O! I think I hear them singing that too, sweetly and softly—"as still as a stone." How would the words come full, like gentle thunder heard in the distance—"as still as a stone!" And when we shall get on the other side the flood, see the triumph over our enemies, and behold our Master reigning, this will form a part of our song, that they must henceforth be "as still as a stone." There will be a hell, but it will not be a hell of roaring devils, as it now is. They shall be "as still as a stone." There will be legions of fallen angels, but they shall no longer have courage to attack us or defy God: they shall be "as still as a stone." O how grand will that sound, when the hosts of God's redeemed, looking down on the demons chained, bound, silenced, struck dumb with terror, shall sing exultingly over them! They must be "as still as a stone;" and there they must lie, and bite their iron bands. The fierce despiser of Christ can no more spit in his face; the proud tyrant can no more lift his hands to oppress the saints; even Satan can no more attempt to destroy. They shall be "as still as a stone."

And last of all, the song concludes by noticing *the eternity of God's reign*; and this will always make a part of the triumphant song. They sang, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Then I can suppose the whole band broke out into their loudest strain of music. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Part of the melody of heaven will be—"The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." That song has cheered us here—"The Lord reigneth; blessed be my Rock!" And that song shall be our exultation there. "The Lord reigneth for ever and ever." When we shall see the placid sea of providence, when we shall behold the world all fair and lovely, when we shall mark our enemies destroyed, and God Almighty triumphant, then we shall shout the song—

"Hallelujah! for the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign;
Hallelujah! let the word
Echo round the earth and main."
O! may we be there to sing it!

I have one remark to make, and I have done. You know, my friends, that as there is something in the song of Moses which is typical of the song of the Lamb, there was another song sung by the waters of the Red Sea which is typical of the song of hell. "What mean you, sir, by that dread thought?" O! shall I use the word music? Shall I profane the heavenly word so much as to say, It was doleful music which came from the lips of Pharaoh and his host? Boldly and pompously, with roll of drum and blast of trumpet they had entered into the sea. On a sudden their martial music ceased ; and ah! ye heavens and ye floods what was it? The sea was coming down upon them, utterly to devour them. O! may we never hear that shriek, that awful yell of hideous agony, that seemed to rend the sky, and then was hushed again, when Pharaoh and his mighty men were swallowed up, and went down quick into hell! Ah! stars, if ye had heard it, if the black pall of waters had not shut out the sound from you, ye might have continued trembling unto this hour, and mayhap ye are trembling now; mayhap your twinklings by night are on account of that terrible shriek ye heard; for sure it were enough to make you tremble on for ever. That dreadful shriek, that hideous moan, that horrible howl, when a whole army sank into hell at once when the waters swallowed them up!

Take heed, my friends, take heed, lest you should have to join in that terrible *miserere*; take heed, lest that horrible howl should be yours, instead of the song of the redeemed. And remember, so must it be, unless ye be born again, unless ye believe in Christ, unless ye repent of sin and renounce it wholly, and with trembling hearts put your confidence in the man of sorrows, who is soon to be crowned the King of kings and Lord of lords. May God bless you, and give you all to taste of his salvation, that you may stand upon the sea of glass, and not have to feel the terrors of the mingled fire in the lower depths thereof! God Almighty bless this vast assembly, for Jesus' sake.

Mercy, Omnipotence, and Justice

A Sermon

(No. 137)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 21, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.”—[Nahum 1:3](#).

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

Now, this is especially true with regard to certain lights and shadows in the character of God, which he has so marvelously blended in the perfection of his nature: that although we can not see the exact point of meeting, yet (if we have been at all enlightened by the Spirit) we are struck with wonder at the sacred harmony. In reading holy Scripture, you can say of Paul, that he was noted for his zeal—of Peter, that he will ever be memorable for his courage—of John, that he was noted for his lovingness. But did you ever notice, when you read the history of our Master, Jesus Christ, that you never could say he was notable for any one virtue at all? Why was that? It was because the boldness of Peter did so outgrow itself as to throw other virtues into the shade, or else the other virtues were so deficient that they set forth his boldness. The very fact of a man being noted for something is a sure sign that he is not so notable in other things; and it is because of the complete perfection of Jesus Christ, that we are not accustomed to say of him that he was eminent for his zeal, or for his

love, or for his courage. We say of him that he was a perfect character; but we are not able very easily to perceive where the shadows and the lights blended, where the meekness of Christ blended into his courage, and where his loveliness blended into his boldness in denouncing sin. We are not able to detect the points where they meet; and I believe the more thoroughly we are sanctified, the more it will be a subject of wonder to us how it could be that virtues which seemed so diverse were in so majestic a manner united in one character.

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

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

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

God is “slow to anger.” When Mercy cometh into the world, she driveth winged steeds; the axles of her chariot-wheels are glowing hot with speed; but when Wrath cometh, it walketh with tardy footsteps; it is not in haste to slay, it is not swift to condemn. God’s rod of mercy is ever in his hands outstretched; God’s sword of justice is in its scabbard: not rusted in it—it can be easily withdrawn—but held there by that hand that presses it back into its sheath, crying, “Sleep, O sword, sleep; for I will have mercy upon sinners, and will forgive their transgressions.” God hath many orators in heaven; some of them speak with swift words. Gabriel, when he cometh down to tell glad tidings, speaketh swiftly; angelic hosts, when they descend from glory, fly with wings of lightning, when they proclaim, “Peace on earth, good will toward men;” but the dark angel of Wrath is a slow orator; with many a pause between, where melting Pity joins her languid notes, he speaks; and when but half his oration is completed he often stays, and withdraws himself from his rostrum, giving way to Pardon and to Mercy; he having but addressed the people that they might be driven to repentance, and so might receive peace from the scepter of God’s love.

Brethren, I shall just try to show you now how God is slow to anger.

First I will prove that he is “slow to anger;” *because he never smites without first threatening*. Men who are passionate and swift in anger give a word and a blow; sometimes the blow first and the word afterward. Oftentimes kings, when subjects have rebelled against them, have crushed them first, and then reasoned with them afterward; they have given no time of threatening, no period of repentance; they have allowed no space for turning to their allegiance; they have at once crushed them in their hot displeasure, making a full end of them. Not so God: he will not cut down the tree that doth much cumber the ground, until he hath digged about it, and dunged it; he will not at once slay the man whose character is the most vile; until he has first hewn him by the prophets he will not hew him by judgments; he will warn the sinner ere he condemn him; he will send his prophets, “rising up early and late,” giving him “line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.” He will not smite the city without warning; Sodom shall not perish, until Lot hath been within her. The world shall not be drowned, until eight prophets have been preaching in it, and Noah, the eighth, cometh to prophesy of the coming of the Lord. He will not smite Nineveh until he hath sent a Jonah. He will not crush Babylon till his prophets have cried through its streets. He will not slay a man until he hath given many warnings, by sicknesses, by the pulpit, by providences, and by consequences. He smites not with a heavy blow at once; he threateneth first. He doth not in grace, as in nature, send lightnings first and thunder afterward; but he sendeth the thunder of his law first, and the lightning of execution follows it. The lictor of divine justice carries his axe bound up in a bundle of rods, for he will not cut off men, until he has reproved them, that they may repent. He is “slow to anger.”

But again: God is also *very slow to threaten*. Although he will threaten before he condemns, yet he is slow even in his threatening. God’s lips move swiftly when he promises, but slowly when he threatens. Long rolls the pealing thunder, slowly roll the drums of heaven, when they sound the death march of sinners; sweetly floweth the music of the rapid notes which proclaim free grace, and love, and mercy. God is slow to threaten. He will not send a Jonah to Nineveh, until Nineveh has become foul with sin; he will not even tell Sodom it shall be burned with fire, until Sodom has become a reeking dung-hill, obnoxious to earth as well as heaven; he will not drown the world with a deluge, or even threaten to do it, until the sons of God themselves make unholy alliances and begin to depart from him. He doth not even threaten the sinner by his conscience, until the sinner hath oftentimes sinned. He will often tell the sinner of his sins, often urge him to repent; but he will not make hell stare him hard in the face, with all its dreadful terror, until much sin has stirred up the lion from his lair, and made God hot with wrath against the iniquities of man. He is slow even to threaten.

But, best of all, when God threatens, *how slow he is to sentence the criminal!* When he has told them that he will punish unless they repent, how long a space he gives them, in

which to turn unto himself! "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for naught;" he stayeth his hand; he will not be in hot haste, when he hath threatened them, to execute the sentence upon them. Have you ever observed that scene in the garden of Eden at the time of the fall? God had threatened Adam that if he sinned he should surely die. Adam sinned: did God make haste to sentence him? 'Tis sweetly said, "The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day." Perhaps that fruit was plucked at early morn, mayhap it was plucked at noontide; but God was in no haste to condemn; he waited till the sun was well nigh set, and in the cool of the day came, and as an old expositor has put it very beautifully, when he did come he did not come on wings of wrath, but he "*walked* in the garden in the cool of the day." He was in no haste to slay. I think I see him, as he was represented then to Adam, in those glorious days when God walked with man. Methinks I see the wonderful similitude in which the Unseen did veil himself: I see it walking among the trees so slowly—ay, if it were right to give such a picture—beating its breast, and shedding tears that it should have to condemn man. At last I hear its doleful voice: "Adam, where art thou? Where hast thou cast thyself, poor Adam? Thou hast cast thyself from my favor; thou hast cast thyself into nakedness and into fear; for thou art hiding thyself Adam, where art thou? I pity thee. Thou thoughtest to be God. Before I condemn thee I will give thee one note of pity. Adam, where art thou?" Yes, the Lord was slow to anger, slow to write the sentence, even though the command had been broken, and the threatening was therefore of necessity brought into force. It was so with the flood: he threatened the earth, but he would not fully seal the sentence, and stamp it with the seal of heaven, until he had given space for repentance. Noah must come, and through his hundred and twenty years must preach the word; he must come and testify to an unthinking and an ungodly generation; the ark must be builded, to be a perpetual sermon; there it must be upon its mountain-top, waiting for the floods to float it, that it might be an every-day warning to the ungodly. O heavens, why did ye not at once open your floods? Ye fountains of the great deep, why did ye not burst up in a moment? God said, "I will sweep away the world with a flood." why, why did ye not rise? "Because," I hear them saying with gurgling notes, "because, although God had threatened, he was slow to sentence, and he said in himself, 'Haply they may repent; peradventure they may turn from their sin;' and therefore did he bid us rest and be quiet, for he is slow to anger."

And yet once more: even when the sentence against a sinner is signed and sealed by heaven's broad seal of condemnation, even then *God is slow to carry it out*. The doom of Sodom is sealed; God hath declared it shall be burned with fire. But God is tardy. He stops. He will himself go down to Sodom, that he may see the iniquity of it. And when he gets there guilt is rife in the streets. 'Tis night, and the crew of worse than beasts besiege the door. Does he then lift his hands? Does he then say, "Rain hell out of heaven, ye skies?" No, he lets them pursue their riot all night, spares them to the last moment, and though when the sun was risen the burning hail began to fall, yet was the reprieve as long as possible. God

was not in haste to condemn. God had threatened to root out the Canaanites; he declared that all the children of Ammon should be cut off; he had promised Abraham that he would give their land unto his seed for ever, and they were to be utterly slain; but he made the children of Israel wait four hundred years in Egypt, and he let these Canaanites live all through the days of the patriarchs; and even then, when he led his avenging ones out of Egypt, he stayed them forty years in the wilderness, because he was loth to slay poor Canaan. "Yet," said he, "I will give them space. Though I have stamped their condemnation, though their death warrant has come forth from the court of King's Bench, and must be executed, yet will I reprieve them as long as I can;" and he stops, until at last mercy had had enough, and Jericho's melting ashes and the destruction of Ai betokened that the sword was out of its scabbard, and God had awaked like a mighty man, and like a strong man full of wrath. God is slow to execute the sentence, even when he has declared it.

And ah! my friends, there is a sorrowful thought that has just crossed my mind. There are some men yet alive who are sentenced now. I believe that Scripture bears me out in a dreadful thought which I just wish to hint at. There are some men that are condemned before they are finally damned; there are some men whose sins go before them unto judgment, who are given over to a seared conscience, concerning whom it may be said that repentance and salvation are impossible. There are some few men in the world who are like John Bunyan's man in the iron cage, can never get out. They are like Esau—they find no place of repentance, though, unlike him, they do not seek it, for if they sought it they would find it. Many there are who have sinned "the sin unto death," concerning whom we can not pray; for we are told, "I do not say that ye shall pray for it." But why, why, why are they not already in the flame? If they be condemned, if mercy has shut its eye forever upon them, if it never will stretch out its hand, to give them pardon, why, why, why are they not cut down and swept away? Because God saith, "I will not have mercy upon them, but I will let them live a little while longer; though I have condemned them I am loth to carry the sentence out, and will spare them as long as it is right that man should live; I will let them have a long life here, for they will have a fearful eternity of wrath for ever." Yes, let them have their little whirl of pleasure; their end shall be most fearful. Let them beware, for although God is slow to anger he is sure in it.

If God were not slow to anger, would he not have smitten this huge city of ours, this behemoth city?—would he not have smitten it into a thousand pieces, and blotted out the remembrance of it from the earth? The iniquities of this city are so great, that if God should dig up her very foundations, and cast her into the sea, she well deserveth it. Our streets at night present spectacles of vice that can not be equaled. Surely there can be no nation and no country that can show a city so utterly debauched as this great city of London, if our midnight streets are indications of our immorality. You allow in your public places of resort—I mean you—my lords and ladies—you allow things to be said in your hearing, of

which your modesty ought to be ashamed. Ye can sit in theaters to hear plays at which modesty should blush; I say naught of piety. That the ruder sex should have listened to the obscenities of *La Traviata* is surely bad enough, but that ladies of the highest refinement, and the most approved taste, should dishonor themselves by such a patronage of vice is indeed intolerable. Let the sins of the lower theaters escape without your censure, ye gentlemen of England, the lowest bestiality of the nethermost hell of a playhouse can look to your opera-houses for their excuse. I thought that with the pretensions this city makes to piety, for sure, they would not have so far gone, and that after such a warning as they have had from the press itself—a press which is certainly not too religious—they would not so indulge their evil passions. But because the pill is gilded, ye suck down the poison; because the thing is popular, ye patronize it: it is lustful, it is abominable, it is deceitful! Ye take your children to hear what yourselves never ought to listen to. Ye yourselves will sit in gay and grand company, to listen to things from which your modesty ought to revolt. And I would fain hope it does, although the tide may for a while deceive you. Ah I God only knoweth the secret wickedness of this great city; it demandeth a loud and a trumpet voice; it needs a prophet to cry aloud, “Sound an alarm, sound an alarm, sound an alarm,” in this city; for verily the enemy groweth upon us, the power of the evil one is mighty, and we are fast going to perdition, unless God shall put forth his hand and roll back the black torrent of iniquity that streameth down our streets. But God is slow to anger, and doth still stay his sword. Wrath said yesterday, “Unsheath thyself, O sword;” and the sword struggled to get free. Mercy put her hand upon the hilt, and said, “Be still!” “Unsheath thyself, O sword!” Again it struggled from its scabbard. Mercy put her hand on it, and said, “Back!”—and it rattled back again. Wrath stamped his foot, and said, “Awake, O sword, awake!” It struggled yet again, till half its blade was outdrawn; “Back, back!” said Mercy, and with manly push she sent it back rattling into its sheath; and there it sleeps still, for the Lord is “slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

Now I am to trace this attribute of God to its source: why is he slow to anger?

He is slow to anger because he is infinitely good. Good is his name; “good”—God. Good is his nature; because he is slow to anger.

He is slow to anger, again, because he is great. Little things are always swift in anger; great things are not so. The surly cur barks at every passer-by, and bears no insult; the lion would bear a thousand times as much; and the bull sleeps in his pasture, and will bear much, before he lifteth up his might. The leviathan in the sea, though he makes the deep to be hoary when he is enraged, yet is slow to be stirred up, while the little and puny are always swift in anger. God’s greatness is one reason of the slowness of his wrath.

II. But to proceed at once to the link. A great reason why he is slow to anger, is because he is GREAT IN POWER. This is to be the connecting link between this part of the subject and the last, and therefore I must beg your attention. I say that this word *great in power*

connects the first sentence to the last; and it does so in this way. The Lord is slow to anger; and he is slow to anger because he is great in power. “How say you so?”—says one. I answer, he that is great in power has power over himself; and he that can keep his own temper down, and subdue himself, is greater than he who rules a city, or can conquer nations. We heard but yesterday, or the day before, mighty displays of God’s power in the rolling thunder which alarmed us; and when we saw the splendor of his might in the glistening lightning, when he lifted up the gates of heaven and we saw the brightness thereof, and then he closed them again upon the dusty earth in a moment—even then we did not see any thing but the hidings of his power, compared with the power which he has over himself. When God’s power doth restrain himself, then it is power indeed, the power to curb power, the power that binds omnipotence in omnipotence surpassed. God is great in power, and therefore doth he keep in his anger. A man who has a strong mind can bear to be insulted, can bear offenses, because he is strong. The weak mind snaps and snarls at the little; the strong mind bears it like a rock; it moveth not, though a thousand breakers dash upon it, and cast their pitiful malice in the spray upon its summit. God marketh his enemies, and yet he moveth not; he standeth still, and letteth them curse him, yet is he not wrathful. If he were less of a God than he is, if he were less mighty than we know him to be, he would long ere this have sent forth the whole of his thunder, and emptied the magazines of heaven; he would long ere this have blasted the earth with the wondrous mines he hath prepared in its lower surface; the flame that burneth there would have consumed us, and we should have been utterly destroyed. We bless God that the greatness of his power is just our protection; he is slow to anger because he is great in power.

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

“The God that reigns on high,
And thunders when he please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas,
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love,

He shall send down his heavenly powers,
To carry us above.”

But the man who is not of an easy conscience will be ill at ease when the timbers of the house are creaking, and the foundations of the solid earth seem to groan. Ah! who is he then that doth not tremble? Yon lofty tree is riven in half; that lightning flash has smitten its trunk, and there it lies for ever blasted, a monument of what God can do. Who stood there and saw it? Was he a swearer? Did he swear then? Was he a Sabbath-breaker? Did he love his Sabbath-breaking then? Was he haughty? Did he then despise God? Ah! how he shook then! Saw you not his hair stand on end? Did not his cheek blanch in an instant? Did he not close his eyes and start back in horror when he saw that dreadful spectacle, and thought God would smite him too? Yes, the power of God, when seen in the tempest, on sea or on land, in the earthquake or in the hurricane, is instinctively a proof that he will not acquit the wicked. I know not how to explain the feeling, but it is nevertheless the truth; majestic displays of omnipotence have an effect upon the mind of convincing even the hardened, that God, who is so powerful, “will not at all acquit the wicked.” Thus have I just tried to explain and make bare the link of the chain.

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

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

But, you say, this has scarcely proved that he will not acquit the wicked. I hold it has proved it, and proved it clearly. But do ye want any further proof that God will not acquit the wicked? Need I lead you through a long list of terrible wonders that God has

wrought—the wonders of his vengeance? Shall I show you blighted Eden? Shall I let you see a world all drowned—sea monsters whelping and stabling in the palaces of kings? Shall I let you hear the last shriek of the last drowning man as he falls into the flood and dies, washed by that huge wave from the hill-top? Shall I let you see death riding upon the summit of a crested billow, upon a sea that knows no shore, and triumphing because his work is done; his quiver empty, for all men are slain, save where life floats in the midst of death in yonder ark? Need I let you see Sodom with its terrified inhabitants, when the volcano of almighty wrath spouted fiery hail upon it? Shall I show you the earth opening its mouth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? Need I take you to the plagues of Egypt? Shall I again repeat the death-shriek of Pharaoh, and the drowning of his host? Surely, ye need not to be told of cities that are in ruins, or of nations that have been cut off in a day; ye need not to be told how God has smitten the earth from one side to the other, when he has been wroth, and how he has melted mountains in his hot displeasure. Nay, we have proofs enough in history, proofs enough in Scripture, that “he will not at all acquit the wicked.” If ye wanted the best proof, however, ye should borrow the black wings of a miserable imagination, and fly beyond the world, through the dark realm of chaos, on, far on, where those battlements of fire are gleaming with a horrid light—if through them, with a spirit’s safety, ye would fly, and would behold the worm that never dies, the pit that knows no bottom, and could you there see the fire unquenchable, and listen to the shrieks and wails of men that are banished for ever from God—if, sirs, it were possible for you to hear the sullen groans and hollow moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts, then would ye come back to this world, amazed and petrified with horror, and you would say, “Indeed he will not acquit the wicked.” You know, hell is the argument of the text; may you never have to prove the text by feeling in yourselves the argument fully carried out, “He will not at all acquit the wicked.”

And now we *trace this terrible attribute to its source*. Why is this ?

We reply, God will not acquit the wicked, *because he is good*. What! doth goodness demand that sinners shall be punished? It doth. The Judge must condemn the murderer, because he loves his nation. “I can not let you go free; I can not, and I must not; you would slay others, who belong to this fair commonwealth, if I were to let you go free; no, I must condemn you from the very loveliness of my nature.” The kindness of a king demands the punishment of those who are guilty. It is not wrathful in the legislature to make severe laws against great sinners; it is but love toward the rest that sin should be restrained. Yon great flood-gates, which keep back the torrent of sin, are painted black, and look right horrible; like horrid dungeon gates, they affright my spirit; but are they proofs that God is not good? No, sirs; if ye could open wide those gates, and let the deluge of sin flow on us, then would you cry “O God, O God! shut-to the gates of punishment again, let law again be established, set up the pillars and swing the gates upon their hinges; shut again the gates of punishment, that this world may not again be utterly destroyed by men who have become worse than brutes.” It

needs for very goodness' sake that sin should be punished, Mercy, with her weeping eyes (for she hath wept for sinners), when she finds they will not repent, looks more terribly stern in her loveliness than Justice in all his majesty; she drops the white flag from her hand, and saith—"No; I called, and they refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; let them die, let them die;"—and that terrible word from the lip of Mercy's self is harsher thunder than the very damnation of Justice. O, yes, the goodness of God demands that men should perish, if they will sin.

And again, *the justice of God demands it*. God is infinitely just, and his justice demands that men should be punished, unless they turn to him with full purpose of heart. Need I pass through all the attributes of God to prove it? Methinks I need not. We must all of us believe that the God who is slow to anger and great in power is also sure not to acquit the wicked. And now just a home-thrust or two with you. What is your state this morning? My friend, man or woman, what is thy state? Canst thou look up to heaven and say, "Though I have sinned greatly I believe Christ was punished in my stead,

"My faith looks back to see,
The burden he did bear,
When hanging on the cursed,
And knows her guilt was there?"

Can you by humble faith look to Jesus, and say, "My substitute, my refuge, my shield; thou art my rock, my trust; in thee do I confide?" Then, beloved, to you I have nothing to say, except this, Never be afraid when you see God's power; for now that you are forgiven and accepted, now that by faith you have fled to Christ for refuge, the power of God need no more terrify you, than the shield and sword of the warrior need terrify his wife or his child. "Nay," saith the woman, "is he strong? He is strong for me. Is his arm brawny, and are all his sinews fast and strong? Then are they fast and strong for me. While he lives, and wears a shield, he will stretch it over my head; and while his good sword can cleave foes, it will cleave my foes too, and ransom me." Be of good cheer; fear not his power.

But hast thou never fled to Christ for refuge? Dost thou not believe in the Redeemer? Hast thou never confided thy soul to his hands? Then, my friends, hear me; in God's name, hear me just a moment. My friend, I would not stand in thy position for an hour, for all the stars twice spelt in gold! For what is thy position? Thou hast sinned, and God will not acquit thee; he will punish thee. He is letting thee live; thou art reprieved. Poor is the life of one that is reprieved without a pardon! Thy reprieve will soon run out; thine hour-glass is emptying every day. I see on some of you death has put his cold hand, and frozen your hair to whiteness. Ye need your staff: it is the only barrier between you and the grave now; and you are, all of you, old and young, standing on a narrow neck of land, between two boundless seas—that neck of land, that isthmus of life, narrowing every moment, and you, and you, and you, are yet unpardoned. There is a city to be sacked, and you are in it—soldiers are at

the gates; the command is given that every man in the city is to be slaughtered save he who can give the password. "Sleep on, sleep on; the attack is not to-day; sleep on, sleep on." "But it is to-morrow, sir." "Ay, sleep on, sleep on; it is not till to-morrow; sleep on, procrastinate, procrastinate." "Hark! I hear a rumbling at the gates; the battering-ram is at them; the gates are tottering." "Sleep on, sleep on; the soldiers are not yet at your doors; sleep on, sleep on; ask for no mercy yet; sleep on, sleep on!" "Ay, but I hear the shrill clarion sound; they are in the streets. Hark, to the shrieks of men and women! They are slaughtering them; they fall, they fall, they fall!" "Sleep on; they are not yet at your door." "But hark, they are at the gate; with heavy tramp I hear the soldiers marching up the stairs! "Nay, sleep on, sleep on; they are not yet in your room." "Why, they are there; they have burst open the door that parted you from them, and there they stand!" "No, sleep on, sleep on; the sword is not yet at your throat; sleep on, sleep on!" It is at your throat, You start with horror. Sleep on, sleep on! But you are gone! "Demon, why toldest thou me to slumber? It would have been wise in me to have escaped the city when first the gates were shaken. Why did I not ask for the password before the troops came? Why, by all that is wise, why did I not rush into the streets, and cry the password when the soldiers were there? Why stood I till the knife was at my throat? Ay, demon that thou art, be cursed; but I am cursed with thee for ever!" You know the application; it is a parable ye can all expound; ye need not that I should tell you that death is after you, that justice must devour you, that Christ crucified is the only password that can save you; and yet you have not learned it—that with some of you death is nearing, nearing, nearing, and that with all of you he is close at hand! I need not expound how Satan is the demon, how in hell you shall curse him and curse yourselves because you procrastinated—how, that seeing God was slow to anger you were slow to repentance—how, because he was great in power, and kept back his anger, therefore you kept back your steps from seeking him; and here you are what you are!

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

Prayer—the Forerunner of Mercy

A Sermon

(No. 138)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 28, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.”—*Ezekiel 36:37*.

IN reading the chapter we have seen the great and exceeding precious promises which God had made to the favored nation of Israel. God in this verse declares, that though the promise was made, and though he would fulfill it, yet he would not fulfill it until his people asked him so to do. He would give them a spirit of prayer, by which they should cry earnestly for the blessing, and then when they should have cried aloud unto the living God, he would be pleased to answer them from heaven, his dwelling-place. The word used here to express the idea of prayer is a suggestive one. “I will yet for this be *enquired of* by the house of Israel.” Prayer, then, is an enquiry. No man can pray aright, unless he views prayer in that light. First, I enquire what the promise is. I turn to my Bible and I seek to find the promise whereby the thing which I desire to seek is certified to me as being a thing which God is willing to give. Having enquired so far as that, I take that promise, and on my bended knees I enquire of God whether he will fulfill his own promise. I take to him his own word of covenant, and I say to him, “O Lord, wilt thou not fulfill it, and wilt thou not fulfill it *now*?” So that there, again, prayer is enquiry. After prayer I look out for the answer; I expect to be heard, and if I am not answered I pray again, and my repeated prayers are but fresh enquiries. I expect the blessing to arrive; I go and enquire whether there is any tidings of its coming. I ask; and thus I say “Wilt thou answer me, O Lord? Wilt thou keep thy promise? Or wilt thou shut up thine ear, because I misunderstand my own wants and mistake thy promise.” Brethren, we must use enquiry in prayer, and regard prayer as being, first, *an enquiry for the promise*, and then on the strength of that promise *an enquiry for the fulfillment*. We expect something to come as a present from a friend: we first have the note, whereby we are informed it is upon the road. We enquire as to what the present is by the reading of the note, and then, if it arrive not, we call at the accustomed place where the parcel ought to have been left, and we ask or enquire for such and such a thing. We have enquired about the promise, and then we go and enquire again, until we get an answer that the promised gift has arrived and is ours. So with prayer. We get the promise by enquiry, and we get the fulfillment of it by again enquiring at God’s hands.

Now, this morning I shall try, as God shall help me, first to speak of prayer as *the prelude of blessing*: next I shall try to show why prayer is thus constituted by God *the forerunner of*

his mercies, and then I shall close by *an exhortation*, as earnest as I can make it, exhorting you to pray, if you would obtain blessings.

I. Prayer is the FORERUNNER OF MERCIES. Many despise prayer: they despise it, because they do not understand it. He who knoweth how to use that sacred art of prayer will obtain so much thereby, that *from its very profitableness* he will be led to speak of it with the highest reverence.

Prayer, we assert, is the prelude of all mercies. We bid you turn back to sacred history, and you will find that never did a great mercy come to this world, unheralded by prayer. The promise comes alone, with no preventing merit to precede it, but the blessing promised always follows its herald, prayer. You shall note that all the wonders that God did in the old times were first of all sought at his hands by the earnest prayers of his believing people. But the other Sabbath we beheld Pharaoh cast into the depths of the Red Sea, and all his hosts “still as a stone” in the depths of the waters. Was there a prayer that preceded that magnificent overthrow of the Lord’s enemies? Turn ye to the Book of Exodus, and ye will read, “The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.” And mark ye not, that just before the sea parted and made a highway for the Lord’s people through its bosom, Moses had prayed unto the Lord, and cried earnestly unto him, so that Jehovah said, “Why criest thou unto me?” A few Sabbaths ago, when we preached on the subject of the rain which came down from heaven in the days of Elijah, you will remember how we pictured the land of Judea as an arid wilderness, a mass of dust, destitute of all vegetation. Rain had not fallen for three years; the pastures were dried up; the brooks had ceased to flow; poverty and distress stared the nation in the face. At an appointed season a sound was heard of abundance of rain, and the torrents poured from the skies, until the earth was deluged with the happy floods. Do you ask me, whether prayer was the prelude to that? I point you to the top of Carmel. Behold a man kneeling before his God, crying, “O my God! send the rain;” lo! the majesty of his faith—he sends his servant Gehazi to look seven times for the clouds, because he believes that they will come, in answer to his prayer. And mark the fact, the torrents of rain were the offspring of Elijah’s faith and prayer. Wherever in Holy Writ you shall find the blessing you shall find the prayer that went before it. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest blessing that men ever had. He was God’s best boon to a sorrowing world. And did prayer precede Christ’s advent? Was there any prayer which went before the coming of the Lord, when he appeared in the temple? Oh yes, the prayers of saints for many ages had followed each other. Abraham saw his day, and when he died Isaac took up the note, and when Isaac slept with his fathers, Jacob and the patriarchs still continued to pray; yea, and in the very days of Christ, prayer was still made for him continually: Anna the prophetess, and the venerable Simeon, still looked for the coming of Christ; and day by day they prayed and interceded with God, that he would suddenly come to his temple.

Ay, and mark you, as it has been in Sacred Writ, so it shall be with regard to greater things that are yet to happen in the fulfillment of promise. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day come in the clouds of heaven. It is my firm belief, in common with all who read the Sacred Scriptures aright, that the day is approaching when the Lord Jesus shall stand a second time upon the earth, when he shall reign with illimitable sway over all the habitable parts of the globe, when kings shall bow before him, and queens shall be nursing mothers of his Church, But when shall that time come? We shall know its coming by its prelude when prayer shall become more loud and strong, when supplication shall become more universal and more incessant, then even as when the tree putteth forth her first green leaves we expect that the spring approacheth, even so when prayer shall become more hearty and earnest, we may open our eyes, for the day of our redemption draweth nigh. Great prayer is the preface of great mercy, and in proportion to our prayer is the blessing that we may expect.

It has been so *in the history of the modern Church*. Whenever she has been roused to pray, it is then that God has awaked to her help. Jerusalem, when thou hast shaken thyself from the dust, thy Lord hath taken his sword from the scabbard. When thou hast suffered thy hands to hang down, and thy knees to become feeble, he has left thee to become scattered by thine enemies; thou hast become barren and thy children have been cut off, but when thou hast learned to cry, when thou hast begun to pray, God hath restored unto thee the joy of his salvation, he hath gladdened thine heart, and multiplied thy children. The history of the Church up to this age has been a series of waves, a succession of ebbs and flows. A strong wave of religious prosperity has washed over the sands of sin, again it has receded, and immorality has reigned. Ye shall read in English history: it has been the same. Did the righteous prosper in the days of Edward VI? They shall again be tormented under a bloody Mary. Did Puritanism become omnipotent over the land, did the glorious Cromwell reign, and did the saints triumph? Charles the second's debaucheries and wickedness became the black receding wave. Again, Whitfield and Wesley poured throughout the nation a mighty wave of religion, which like a torrent drove everything before it. Again it receded, and there came the days of Payne, and of men full of infidelity and wickedness. Again there came a strong impulse, and again God glorified himself. And up to this date, again, there has been a decline. Religion, though more fashionable than it once was, has lost much of its vitality and power, much of the zeal and earnestness of the ancient preachers has departed, and the wave has receded again. But, blessed be God, flood tide has again set in: once more God hath aroused his Church. We have seen in these days what our fathers never hoped to see: we have seen the great men of a Church, not too noted for its activity, at last coming forth—and God be with them in their coming forth! They have come forth to preach unto the people the unsearchable riches of God. I do hope we may have another great wave of religion rolling in upon us. Shall I tell you what I conceive to be the moon that influences

these waves? My brethren, even as the moon influences the tides of the sea, even so doth prayer, (which is the reflection of the sunlight of heaven, and is God's moon in the sky,) influence the tides of godliness; for when our prayers become like the crescent moon, and when we stand not in conjunction with the sun, then there is but a shallow tide of godliness, but when the full orb shines upon the earth, and when God Almighty makes the prayers of his people full of joy and gladness, it is then that the sea of grace returneth to its strength. In proportion to the prayerfulness of the Church shall be its present success, though its ultimate success is beyond the reach of hazard.

And now again, to come nearer home: this truth is true of each of you my dearly beloved in the Lord *in your own personal experience*. God has given you many an unsolicited favor, but still great prayer has always been the great prelude of great mercy with you. When you first found peace through the blood of the cross you had been praying much beforehand, and earnestly interceding with God that he would remove your doubts, and deliver you from your distresses. Your assurance was the result of prayer. And when at any time you have had high and rapturous joys, you have been obliged to look upon them as answers to your prayers, when you have had great deliverances out of sore troubles, and mighty helps in great dangers, you have been able to say, "I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me out of all my fears." Prayer, we say, in your case, as well as in the case of the Church at large, is always the preface to blessing.

And now some will say to me, "In what way do you regard prayer, then, as affecting the blessing? God, the Holy Ghost vouchsafes prayer before the blessing; but in what way is prayer connected with the blessing?" I reply, prayer goes before the blessing in several senses. It goes before the blessing, *as the blessing's shadow*. When the sunlight of God's mercy rises upon our necessities, it casts the shadow of prayer far down upon the plain, or, to use another illustration, when God piles up a hill of mercies, he himself shines behind them, and he casts on our spirits the shadow of prayer, so that we may rest certain, if we are in prayer, our prayers are the shadows of mercy. Prayer is the rustling of the wings of the angels that are on their way bringing us the boons of heaven. Have you heard prayer in your heart? You shall see the angel in your house. When the chariots that bring us blessings do rumble, their wheels do sound with prayer. We hear the prayer in our own spirits, and that prayer becomes the token of the coming blessings. Even as the cloud foreshadoweth rain, so prayer foreshadoweth the blessing; even as the green blade is the beginning of the harvest, so is prayer the prophecy of the blessing that is about to come.

Again: prayer goes before mercy, *as the representative of it*. Often times the king, in his progress through his realms, sends one before him, who blows a trumpet; and when the people see him they know that the king cometh, because the trumpeter is there. But, perhaps, there is before him a more important personage, who says, "I am sent before the king to prepare for his reception, and I am this day to receive aught that you have to send the king,

for I am his representative.” So prayer is the representative of the blessing before the blessing comes. The prayer comes, and when I see the prayer, I say, “Prayer, thou art the vice-regent of the blessing, if the blessing be the king, thou art the regent. I know and look upon thee as being the representative of the blessing I am about to receive.”

But I do think also that sometimes, and generally, prayer goes before the blessing, *even as the cause goes before the effect*. Some people say, when they get anything, that they get it because they prayed for it, but if they are people who are not spiritually minded, and who have no faith, let them know, that whatever they may get it is not in answer to prayer, for we know that God heareth not sinners, and the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.” “Well,” says one, “I asked God for such-and-such a thing the other day. I know I am no Christian, but I got it. Don’t you consider that I had it through my prayers?” No, sir, no more than I believe the reasoning of the old man who affirmed that the Goodwin Sands had been caused by the building of Tenterden steeple, for the sands had not been there before, and the sea did not come up till it was built, and therefore, said he, the steeple must have caused the flood. Now, your prayers have no more connection with your blessing than the sea with the steeple, in the Christian’s case it is far different. Oft-times the blessing is actually brought down from heaven by the prayer. An objector may reply, “I believe that prayer may have much influence on yourself, sir, but I do not believe that it has any effect on the Divine Being.” Well, sir, I shall not try to convince you; because it is useless for me to try to convince you of that, unless you believe the testimonies I bring, as it would be to convince you of any historical fact by simply reasoning about it. I could bring out of this congregation not one, nor twenty, but many hundreds, who are rational, intelligent persons, and who would, each of them, most positively declare, that some hundreds of times in their lives they have been led to seek most earnestly deliverance out of trouble, or help in adversity, and they have received the answers to their prayers in so marvellous a manner that they themselves did no more doubt their being answers to their cries than they could doubt the existence of a God. They felt sure that he heard them; they were certain of it. Oh! the testimonies to the power of prayer are so numberless, that the man who rejects them flies in the face of good testimonies. We are not all enthusiasts; some of us are cool blooded enough, we are not all fanatics; we are not all quite wild in our piety, some of us in other things, we reckon, act in a tolerably common sense way. But yet we all agree in this, that our prayers have been heard; and we could tell many stories of our prayers, still fresh upon our memories, where we have cried unto God, and he has heard us. But the man, who says he does not believe God hears prayer, knows he does. I have no respect to his scepticism, any more than I have any respect to a man’s doubt about the existence of a God. The man does not doubt it; he has to choke his own conscience before he dares to say he does. It is complimenting him too much to argue with him. Will you argue with a liar? He affirms a lie, and knows it is so. Will you condescend to argue with him, to prove that he is untrue! The man

is incapable of reasoning; he is beyond the pale of those who ought to be treated as respectable persons. If a man rejects the existence of a God, he does it desperately against his own conscience, and if he is bad enough to stifle his own conscience so much as to believe that, or pretend that he believes it, we think we shall demean ourselves if we argue with so loose a character. He must be solemnly warned, for reason is thrown away upon deliberate liars. But you know, sir, God hears prayer; because if you do not, either way you must be a fool. You are a fool for not believing so, and a worse fool for praying yourself; when you do not believe he hears you. “But I do not pray sir.” Do not pray? Did I not hear a whisper from your nurse when you were sick? She said you were a wonderful saint when you had the fever. You do not pray! No, but when things do not go quite well in business you would to God that they would go better, and you do sometimes cry out to him a kind of prayer which he cannot accept, but which is still enough to show that there is an instinct in man that teaches him to pray, I believe that even as birds build their nests without any teaching, so men use prayer in the form of it (I do not mean spiritual prayer): I say, men use prayer from the very instinct of nature. There is something in man which makes him a praying animal. He cannot help it; he is obliged to do it. He laughs at himself when he is on the dry land; but he prays when he is on the sea and in a storm, he seeks at prayer when he is well, but when he is sick he prays as fast as anybody. He—he would not pray when he is rich; but when he is poor, he prays then strongly enough. He knows God hears prayer, and he knows that men should pray. There is no disputing with him. If he dares to deny his own conscience he is incapable of reasoning, he is beyond the pale of morality, and therefore we dare not try to influence him by reasoning. Other means we may and hope we shall use with him, but not that which compliments him by allowing him to answer. O saints of God! whatever ye can give up, ye can never give up this truth, that God heareth prayer; for if ye did disbelieve it to-day, ye would have to believe it again to-morrow; for ye would have such another proof of it through some other trouble that would roll over your head that ye would be obliged to feel, if ye were not obliged to say, “Verily, God heareth and answereth prayer.”

Prayer, then, is the prelude of mercy, for very often it is the cause of the blessing; that is to say, it is a part cause; the mercy of God being the great first cause, prayer is often the secondary agency whereby the blessing is brought down.

II. And now I am going to try to show you, in the second place, WHY IT IS THAT GOD IS PLEASED TO MAKE PRAYER THE TRUMPETER OF MERCY, OR THE FORERUNNER OF IT.

1. I think it is, in the first place, *because God loves that man should have some reason for having a connexion with him*. Saith God, “My creatures will shun me, even my own people will too little seek me—they will flee from me, instead of coming to me. What shall I do? I intend to bless them: shall I lay the blessings at their doors so that when they open them in the morning they may find them there, unasked and unsought?” “Yes,” saith God, “many

mercies I will so do with; I will give them much that they need, without their seeking for it, but in order that they may not wholly forget me, there are some mercies that I will not put at their doors but I will make them come to my house after them. I love my children to visit me,” says the heavenly Father; “I love to see them in my courts, I delight to hear their voices and to see their faces; they will not come to see me if I give them all they want; I will keep them sometimes without, and then they will come to me and ask, and I shall have the pleasure of seeing them, and they will have the profit of entering into fellowship with me.” It is as if some father should say to his son who is entirely dependent upon him, “I might give you a fortune at once, so that you might never have to come upon me again; but, my son, it delights me, it affords me pleasure to supply your wants. I like to know what it is you require, that I may oftentimes have to give you, and so may frequently see your face. Now I shall give you only enough to serve you for such a time, and if you want to have anything you must come to my house for it. O, my son, I do this because I desire to see thee often; I desire often to have opportunities of showing how much I love thee.” So doth God say to his children, “I do not give you all at once; I give all to you in the promise, but if you want to have it in the detail, you must come to me to ask me for it: so shall you see my face, and so shall you have a reason for often coming to my feet.”

2. But there is another reason. God would make prayer the preface to mercy, *because often prayer itself gives the mercy*. You are full of fear and sorrow, you want *comfort*, God says, pray, and you shall get it; and the reason is because prayer is of itself a comforting exercise. We are all aware, that when we have any heavy news upon our minds, it often relieves us if we can tell a friend about it. Now there are some troubles we would not tell to others, for perhaps many minds could not sympathize with us: God has therefore provided prayer, as a channel for the flow of grief. “Come,” saith he, “thy troubles may find vent here; come, put them into my ear; pour out thine heart before me, and so wilt thou prevent its bursting. If thou must weep, come and weep at my mercy-seat; if thou must cry come and cry in the closet, and I will hear thee.” And how often have you and I tried that! We have been on our knees overwhelmed with sorrow, and we have risen up, and said, “Ah! I can meet it all now!”

“Now I can say my God is mine
Now I can all my joys resign,
Can tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great.”
Prayer itself sometimes gives the mercy.

Take another case. You are in difficulty, you don't know which way to go, nor how to act. God has said that he will *direct* his people. You go forth in prayer and pray to God to direct you. Are you aware that your very prayer will frequently of itself furnish you with the answer? For while the mind is absorbed in thinking over the matter, and in praying concerning the matter, it is just in the likeliest state to suggest to itself the course which is proper,

for whilst in prayer I am spreading all the circumstances before God, I am like a warrior surveying the battle-field, and when I rise I know the state of affairs, and know how to act. Often, thus, you see, prayer gives the very thing we ask for in itself. Often when I have had a passage of Scripture that I cannot understand, am I in the habit of spreading the Bible before me, and if I have looked at all the commentators, and they do not seem to agree, I have spread the Bible on my chair, kneeled down, put my finger upon the passage, and sought of God instruction. I have thought that when I have risen from my knees I understood it far better than before; I believe that the very exercise of prayer did of itself bring the answer, to a great degree, for the mind being occupied upon it, and the heart being exercised with it, the whole man was in the most excellent position for truly understanding it. John Bunyan says, “The truths that I know best I have learned on my knees;” and says he again, “I never know a thing well till it is burned into my heart by prayer.” Now that is in a great measure through the agency of God’s Holy Spirit; but I think that it may in some measure also be accounted for by the fact that prayer exercises the mind upon the thing, and then the mind is led by an insensible process to lay hold upon the right result. Prayer, then is a suitable prelude to the blessing, because often it carrieth the blessing in itself.

3. But again it seemeth but right, and just, and appropriate, that prayer should go before the blessing, *because in prayer there is a sense of need*. I cannot as a man distribute assistance to those who do not represent their case to me as being destitute and sick. I cannot suppose that the physician will trouble himself to leave his own house to go into the house of one that is ill, unless the need has been specified to him, and unless he has been informed that the case requires his assistance; nor can we expect of God, that he will wait upon his own people, unless his own people should first state their need to him, shall feel their need, and come before him crying for a blessing. A sense of need is a divine gift; prayer fosters it, and is therefore highly beneficial.

4. And yet again, prayer before the blessing *serves to show us the value of it*. If we had the blessings without asking for them, we should think them common things; but prayer makes the common pebbles of God’s temporal bounties more precious than diamonds; and in spiritual prayer, cuts the diamond, and makes it glisten more. The thing was precious, but I did not know its preciousness till I had sought for it, and sought it long. After a long chase the hunter prizes the animal because he has set his heart upon it and is determined to have it; and yet more truly, after a long hunger he that eateth findeth more relish in his food. So prayer doth sweeten the mercy. Prayer teaches us its preciousness. It is the reading over of the bill, the schedule, the account, before the estate and the properties are themselves transferred. We know the value of the purchase by reading over the will of it in prayer, and when we have groaned out our own expression of its peerless price, then it is that God bestows the benediction upon us. Prayer, therefore, goes before the blessing, because it shows us the value of it.

But doubtless even reason itself suggests that it is but natural that God, the all-good, should give his favors to those that ask. It seemeth but right that he should expect of us, that we should first ask at his hands, and then he will bestow. It is goodness great enough that his hand is ready to open: surely it is but little that he should say to his people, “For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.”

III. Let me close BY STIRRING YOU UP TO USE THE HOLY ART OF PRAYER AS A MEANS OF OBTAINING THE BLESSING. Do you demand of me, and for what shall we pray? The answer is upon my tongue. Pray for *yourselves*, pray for *your families*, pray for the *Churches*, pray for *the one great kingdom of our Lord on earth*.

Pray for *yourselves*. Sure you will never lack some subject for intercession. So broad are your wants, so deep are your necessities, that until you are in heaven you will always find room for prayer. Dost thou need nothing? Then I fear thou dost not know thyself. Hast thou no mercy to ask of God? Then I fear thou hast never had mercies of him, and art yet “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” If thou be a child of God, thy wants will be as numerous as thy moments and thou wilt need to have as many prayers as there are hours. Pray that thou mayest be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; pray that thou mayest have communion with Christ, and enter into the banqueting-house of his love. Pray for thyself, that thou mayest be an example unto others, that thou mayest honor God here, and inherit his kingdom hereafter.

In the next place, pray for your *families*; for your children. If they be pious, you can still pray for them that their piety may be real, that they may be upheld in their profession. And if they be ungodly, you have a whole fountain of arguments for prayer. So long as thou hast a child unpardoned, pray for it; so long as thou hast a child alive that is saved, pray for him, that he may be kept. Thou hast enough reason to pray for those that have proceeded from thine own loins. But if thou hast no cause to do that, pray for thy servants. Wilt thou not stoop to that? Then surely thou hast not stooped to be saved; for he that is saved knoweth how to pray for all. Pray for thy servants, that they may serve God, that their life in thine house may be of use to them. That is an ill house where the servants are unprayed for. I should not like to be waited upon by one for whom I could not pray, Perhaps the day when this world shall perish will be the day unbrightened by a prayer; and perhaps the day when a great misdeed was done by some man, was the day when his friends left off praying for him. Pray for your households.

And then pray for the *Church*. Let the minister have a place in your heart. Mention his name at your family altar, and in your closet. You expect him to come before you day after day, to teach you the things of the kingdom, and exhort and stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. If he be a true minister, there will be work to be done in this matter. He cannot write his sermon and read it to you; he does not believe Christ said, “Go and *read* the gospel to every creature.” Dost thou know the cares of a minister? Dost thou know the

trouble he has with his own church—how the erring ones do grieve him, how even the right ones do vex his spirit by their infirmities—how, when the church is large, there will always be some great trouble in the hearts of some of his people? And he is the reservoir of all: they come to him with all their grief; he is to “weep with them that weep.” And in the pulpit what is his work? God is my witness, I scarcely ever prepare for my pulpit with pleasure: study for the pulpit is to me the most irksome work in the world I have never come into this house that I know of with a smile upon mine heart; I may have sometimes gone out with one; but never have I had one when I entered. Preach, preach, twice a day I can and will do, but still there is a travailing in preparation for it, and even the utterance is not always accompanied with joy and gladness, and God knoweth that if it were not for the good that we trust is to be accomplished by the preaching of the Word, it is no happiness to a man’s life to be well known. It robs him of all comfort to be from morning to night heated for labor, to have no rest for the sole of his foot or for his brain—to be a great religious hack—to bear every burden—to have people asking, as they do in the country, when they want to get into a cart, “Will it hold it?”—never thinking whether the horse can drag it; to have them asking, “Will you preach at such a place? you are preaching twice, couldn’t you manage to get to such a place, and preach again?” Every one else has a constitution; the minister has none, until he kills himself and is condemned as imprudent. If you are determined to do your duty in that place to which God has called you, you need the prayers of your people, that you may be able to do the work, and you will need their abundant prayers that you may be sustained in it. I bless God that I have a valiant corps of men, who day without night besiege God’s throne on my behalf. I would speak to you, my brethren and sisters, again, and beseech you, by our loving days that are past, by all the hard fighting that we have had side by side with each other, not to cease to pray now. The time was when in hours of trouble, you and I have bended our knees together in God’s house and we have prayed to God that he would give us a blessing. You remember how great and sore troubles did roll over our head—how men did ride over us. We went through fire and through water, and now God has brought us into a large place, and so multiplied us, let us not cease to pray. Let us still cry out unto the living God, that he may give us a blessing. Oh! may God help me, if you cease to pray for me! Let me know the day, and I must cease to preach. Let me know when you intend to cease your prayers, and I shall cry, “O my God, give me this day my tomb, and let me slumber in the dust.”

And lastly, let me bid you pray *for the church at large*. This is a happy time we live in. A certain race of croaking souls, who are never pleased with anything, are always crying out about the badness of the times. They cry, “Oh! for the good old times!” Why, these are the good old times, time never was so old as it is now. These are the best times. I do think that many an old puritan would jump out of his grave if he knew what was doing now. If they could have been told of the great movement at Exeter Hall, there is many a man among

them who once fought against the Church of England, who would lift his hand to heaven, and cry, “My God, I bless thee that I see such a day as this!” In these times there is a breaking down of many of the barriers. The bigots are afraid; they are crying out most desperately, because they think God’s people will soon love each other too well. They are afraid that the trade of persecution will soon be done with, if we begin to be more and more united. So they are making an outcry, and saying, “These are not good times.” But true lovers of God will say they have not lived in better days than these; and they all hopefully look for greater things still. Unless you professors of religion are eminently in earnest in prayer, you will disgrace yourselves by neglecting the finest opportunity that ever men had. I do think that your fathers who lived in days when great men were upon earth, who preached with much power—I do think, if they had not prayed, they would have been as unfaithful as you will be. For now the good ship floats upon a flood tide: sleep now, and you will not cross the bar at the harbour’s mouth. Never did the sun of prosperity seem to shine much more fully on the church during the last hundred years than now. Now is your time, neglect now to sow your seed in this good time of seed-sowing; neglect now to reap your harvest in these good days when it is ripe, and darker days may come, and those of peril, when God shall say, “Because they would not cry to me, when I stretched out my hands to bless them, therefore will I put away my hand, and will no more bless them, until again they shall seek me.”

And now to close. I have a young man here who has been lately converted. His parents cannot bear him; they entertain the strongest opposition to him, and they threaten him that if he does not leave off praying they will turn him out of doors. Young man! I have a little story to tell you. There was once a young man in your position: he had begun to pray, and his father knew it. He said to him, “John, you know I am an enemy to religion, and prayer is a thing that never shall be offered in my house.” Still the young man continued earnest in supplication. “Well,” said the father one day, in a hot passion, “you must give up either God or me. I solemnly swear that you shall never darken the threshold of my door again, unless you decide that you will give up praying. I give you till to-morrow morning to choose. The night was spent in prayer by the young disciple. He rose in the morning, sad to be cast away by his friends, but resolute in spirit, that come what might he would serve his God. The father abruptly accosted him—“Well, what is the answer?” “Father,” he said, “I cannot violate my conscience, I cannot forsake my God.” “Leave immediately,” said he. And the mother stood there; the father’s hard spirit had made hers hard too and though she might have wept she concealed her tears. “Leave immediately” said he. Stepping outside the threshold the young man said, “I wish you would grant me one request before I go; and if you grant me that, I will never trouble you again.” “Well,” said the father, “you shall have anything you like, but mark me, you go after you have had that; you shall never have anything again.” “It is,” said the son, “that you and my mother would kneel down, and let me pray for you before I go.” Well, they could hardly object to it; the young man was on his knees

in a moment, and began to pray with such unction and power, with such evident love to their souls, with such true and divine earnestness, that they both fell flat on the ground, and when the son rose there they were; and the father said, “You need not go, John; come and stop, come and stop;” and it was not long before not only he, but the whole of them began to pray and they were united to a Christian Church. So do not give way. Persevere kindly but firmly. It may be that God shall enable you not only to have your own souls saved, but to be the means of bringing your persecuting parents to the foot of the cross. That such may be the case is our earnest prayer.

Christ Lifted Up

A Sermon

(No. 139)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 5, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.”—[John 12:32](#).

IT was an extraordinary occasion upon which the Saviour uttered these words. It was the crisis of the world. We very often speak of the “present crisis of affairs,” and it is very common for persons of every period to believe their own age to be the crisis and turning point of the whole world’s history. They rightly imagine that very much of the future depends upon their present exertions; but they wrongly stretch the thought, and imagine that the period of their existence is the very hinge of the history of the world: that it is the crisis. Now, however it may be correct, in a modified sense, that every period of time is in some sense a crisis, yet there never was a time which could be truly called a crisis, in comparison with the season when our Saviour spoke. In the 31st verse, immediately preceding my text, we find in the English translation, “Now is the judgment of this world;” but we find in the Greek, “Now is the crisis of this world.” The world had come to a solemn crisis: now was the great turning point of all the world’s history. Should Christ die, or should he not? If he would refuse the bitter cup of agony, the world is doomed, if he should pass onward, do battle with the powers of death and hell! and come off a victor, then the world is blessed, and her future shall be glorious. Shall he succumb? Then is the world crushed and ruined beneath the trail of the old serpent. Shall he conquer? Shall he lead captivity captive and receive gifts for men? Then this world shall yet see times when there shall be “a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” “Now is the crisis of this world!” “The crisis,” he says, “is two-fold. Dealing with Satan and men. I will tell you the result of it. ‘Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.’ Fear not that hell shall conquer. I shall cast him out; and, on the other hand doubt not but that I shall be victorious over the hearts of men. ‘I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.’” Remembering the occasion upon which these words were uttered, we shall now proceed to a discussion of them.

We have three things to notice. *Christ crucified, Christ’s glory.* He calls it a lifting him up. *Christ crucified, the minister’s theme.* It is the minister’s business to lift Christ up in the gospel. *Christ crucified, the heart’s attraction.* “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” *His own glory—the minister’s theme—the heart’s attraction.*

I. I begin then: CHRIST’S CRUCIFIXION IS CHRIST’S GLORY. He uses the word “lifted up” to express the manner of his death. “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” But notice the choice of the word to

express his death. He does not say, I, if I be crucified, I, if I be hanged on the tree; no, but “I if I be lifted up:” and in the Greek there is the meaning of exaltation. “I, if I be exalted—I if I be lifted on high.” He took the outward and risible fashion of the cross, it being a lifting of him up, to be the type and symbol of the glory with which the cross should invest even him. “I, if I be lifted up.”

Now, *the cross of Christ is Christ’s glory*. We will show you how. Man seeks to win his glory by the slaughter of others—Christ by the slaughter of himself: men seek to get crowns of gold—he sought a crown of thorns: men think that glory lieth in being exalted over others—Christ thought that his glory did lie in becoming “a worm and no man,” a scoff and reproach amongst all that beheld him. He stooped when he conquered; and he counted that the glory lay as much in the stooping as in the conquest.

Christ was glorified on the cross, we say, first, *because love as always glorious*. If I might prefer any glory, I should ask to be beloved by men. Surely, the greatest glory that a man can have among his fellows is not that of mere admiration, when they stare at him as he passes through the street, and throng the avenues to behold him as he rideth in his triumph; the greatest fame, the greatest glory of a patriot is the love of his country—to feel that young men and maidens, old men and sires, are prepared to fall at his feet in love, to give up all they have to serve him who has served them. Now, Christ won more love by the cross than he did ever win elsewhere. O Lord Jesus, thou wouldst never have been so much loved, if thou hadst sat in heaven for ever, as thou art now loved since thou hast stooped to death. Not cherubim and seraphim, and angels clad in light, ever could have loved with hearts so warm as thy redeemed above, or even thy redeemed below. Thou didst win love more abundantly by the nail than by thy scepter. Thine open side brought thee no emptiness of love, for thy people love thee with all their hearts. Christ won glory by his cross. He was never so lifted up as when he was cast down; and the Christian will bear witness, that though he loves his Master anywhere, yet nothing moves his heart to rapture and vehemence of love, like the story of the crucifixion and the agonies of Calvary.

Again: Christ at this time won much glory *by fortitude*. The cross was a trial of Christ’s fortitude and strength, and therein it was a garden in which his glory might be planted. The laurels of his crown were sown in a soil that was saturated with his own blood. Sometimes the ambitious soldier pants for battle, because in days of peace he cannot distinguish himself. “Here I sit,” saith he, “and rust my sword in my scabbard, and win no glory; let me rush to the cannon’s mouth; though some call honor a Fainted bauble, it may be so, yet I am a soldier, and I want it” and he pants for the encounter that he may win glory. Now, in an infinitely higher sense than that poor glory which the soldier gets, Christ looked upon the cross as being his way to honor. “Oh!” said he, “now shall be the time of my endurance: I have suffered much, but I shall suffer more, and then shall the world see what a strong heart of love I have; how patient is the Lamb, how mighty to endure. Never would Christ have had

such paeans of praise and such songs of honor as he now winneth, if he had avoided the conflict, and the battle, and the agony. We might have blessed him for what he is and for what he wished to do; we might have loved him for the very longings of his heart but we never could have praised him for his strong endurance, for his intrepid spirit, for his unconquerable love, if we had not seen him put to the severe test of crucifixion and the agonies of that awful day. Christ did win glory by his being crucified.

Again: Christ looked upon his crucifixion *as the completion of all his work*, and therefore he looked upon it as an exaltation. The completion of an enterprise is the harvest of its honor. Though thousands have perished in the arctic regions, and have obtained fame for their intrepid conduct, yet, my friends, the man who at last discovers the passage is the most of all honored; and though we shall for ever remember those bold men who pushed their way through winter in all its might, and dared the perils of the deep, yet the man who accomplishes the deed wins more than his share of the glory. Surely the accomplishment of an enterprise is just the point where the honor hangs. And, my hearers, Christ longed for the cross, because he looked for it as the goal of all his exertions. It was to be the place upon which he could say, "It is finished." He could never say "It is finished" on his throne: but on his cross he did cry it. He preferred the sufferings of Calvary to the honors of the multitude who crowded round about him; for, preach as he might, and bless them as he might, and heal them as he might, still was his work undone. He was straitened; he had a baptism to be baptized with, and how was he straitened till it was accomplished. "But," he said, "now I pant for my cross, for it is the topstone of my labor. I long for my sufferings, because they shall be the completion of my great work of grace." Brethren, it is the end that bringeth the honor; it is the victory that crowneth the warrior rather than the battle. And so Christ longed for this, his death, that he might see the completion of his labor. "Ay," said he, "when I am crucified, I am exalted, and lifted up."

And, once again, Christ looked upon his crucifixion with the eye of firm faith *as the hour of triumph*. His disciples thought that the cross would be a degradation; Christ looked through the outward and visible, and beheld the spiritual. "The cross," said he, "the gibbet of my doom may seem to be cursed with ignominy, and the world shall stand round and hiss at the crucified; my name be for ever dishonored as one who died upon the tree; and cavillers and scoffers may for ever throw this in the teeth of my friends that I died with the malefactor; but I look not at the cross as you do. I know its ignominy, but I despise the shame—I am prepared to endure it all. I look upon the cross as the gate of triumph, as the portal of victory. Oh, shall I tell you what I shall behold upon the cross?—just when mine eye is swimming with the last tear, and when my heart is palpitating with its last pang; just when my body is rent with its last thrill of anguish, then mine eye shall see the head of the dragon broken, it shall see hell's towers dismantled and its castle fallen. Mine eye shall see my seed eternally saved, I shall behold the ransomed coming from their prison-houses. In

that last moment of my doom, when my mouth is just preparing for its last cry of 'It is finished;' I shall behold the year of my redeemed come, I shall shout my triumph in the delivery of all my beloved! Ay, and I shall see then, the world, mine own earth conquered, and usurpers all dethroned, and I shall behold in vision the glories of the latter days, when I shall sit upon the throne of my father David and judge the earth, attended with the pomp of angels and the shouts of my beloved!" Yes, Christ saw in his cross the victories of it, and therefore did he pant and long for it as being the place of victory and the means of conquest. "I," said Jesus, "if I be lifted up, if I be exalted," he puts his crucifixion as being his glory. This is the first point of our text.

II. But, now, secondly, CHRIST HAS ANOTHER LIFTING UP, not ignominious, but truly honorable; there is a lifting of him upon the pole of the gospel, in the preaching of the Word. Christ Jesus is to be lifted up every day; for that purpose he came into the world: "That like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," even so he might by the preaching of the truth be lifted up, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ is THE MINISTER'S GREAT THEME, in opposition to a thousand other things which most men choose. I would prefer that the most prominent feature in my ministry should be the preaching of Christ Jesus. Christ should be most prominent, *not hell and damnation*. God's ministers must preach God's terrors as well as God's mercies; we are to preach the thunder of God's law. If men will sin, we are to tell them that they must be punished for it. If they will transgress, woe unto the watchman who is ashamed to say, "The Lord cometh that taketh vengeance." We should be unfaithful to the solemn charge which God has given us if we were wickedly to stifle all the threatenings of God's word. Does God say, "The wicked shall be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God?" It is our business to say so. Did the loving Saviour talk of the pit that burneth, of the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that can never be extinguished? It is ours to speak as he spake, and not to mince the matter. It is no mercy to men to hide their doom. But, my brethren, terrors never ought to be the prominent feature of a minister's preaching. Many old divines thought they would do a great deal of good by preaching this. I do not believe it. Some souls are awakened and terrified by such preaching; they however, are but few. Sometimes, right solemnly, the sacred mysteries of eternal wrath must be preached, but far oftener let us preach the wondrous love of God. There are more souls won by wooing than by threatening. It is not hell, but Christ, we desire to preach. O sinners, we are not afraid to tell you of your doom, but we do not choose to be for ever dwelling on that doleful theme. We rather love to tell you of Christ, and him crucified. We want to have our preaching rather full of the frankincense of the merits of Christ than of the smoke, and fire, and terrors of Mount Sinai, we are not come unto Mount Sinai, but unto Mount Zion—where milder words declare the will of God, and rivers of salvation are abundantly flowing.

Again, the theme of a minister should be Christ Jesus in opposition to *mere doctrine*. Some of my good brethren are always preaching doctrine. Well, they are right in so doing, but I would not care myself to have as the characteristic of my preaching, doctrine only. I would rather have it said, “He dwelt much upon the person of Christ, and seemed best pleased when he began to tell about the atonement and the sacrifice. He was not ashamed of the doctrines, he was not afraid of threatening, but he seemed as if he preached the threatening with tears in his eyes, and the doctrine solemnly as God’s own word; but when he preached of Jesus his tongue was loosed, and his heart was at liberty.” Brethren, there are some men who preach the doctrine only, who are an injury, I believe to God’s church rather than a benefit. I know of men who have set themselves up as umpires over all spirits. They are *the* men. Wisdom will die with them. If they were once taken away the great standard of truth would be removed. We do not wonder that they hate the Pope, two of a trade never agree, for they are far more popish than he, they being themselves infallible. I am afraid that very much of the soundness of this age, is but a mere sound, and is not real; does not enter into the eye of the heart, nor affect the being. Brethren, we would rather preach Christ than election. We love election, we love predestination, we love the great doctrines of God’s word, but we had rather preach Christ than preach these. We desire to put Christ over the head of the doctrine, we make the doctrine the throne for Christ to sit on, but we dare not put Christ at the bottom, and then press him down, and overload him with the doctrines of his own word.

And again, the minister ought to preach Christ in opposition to *mere morality*. How many ministers in London could preach as well out of Shakespeare as the Bible, for all they want is a moral maxim. The good man never thinks of mentioning regeneration. He sometimes talks of moral renovation. He does not think of talking about perseverance by grace. No, continuance in well-doing is his perpetual cry. He does not think of preaching “believe and be saved.” No; his continual exhortation is, “Good Christian people, say your prayers, and behave well, and by these means you shall enter the kingdom of heaven.” The sum and substance of his gospel is that we can do very well without Christ, that although certainly there is a little amiss in us, yet if we just mend our ways in some little degree, that old text, “except a man be born again,” need not trouble us. If you want to be made drunkards, if you want to be made dishonest, if you want to be taught every vice in the world, go and hear a moral preacher. These gentlemen, in their attempts to reform and make people moral, are the men that lead them from morality. Hear the testimony of holy Bishop Lavington, “We have long been attempting to reform the nation by moral preaching. With what effect! None. On the contrary, we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. We must change our voice; we must preach Christ and him crucified; nothing but the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.”

And yet one more remark. The minister ought to preach Christ in opposition to some who think they ought to preach *learning*. God forbid we should ever preach against learning. The more of it a man can get, the better for him; and the better for his hearers if he has grace enough to use it well, but there are some who have so much of learning, that if in the course of their readings they find a very hard word, out comes the pencil-case: they jot it down, to be glorified in the next Sunday morning's sermon. Do they find out some outlandish German expression, which, if pulled to pieces, would mean nothing, but which looks as if it must be something wonderful, that must always come out, if all the gospel go to the wall. You ought to pray to God that they may never be allowed to read anything but their Bibles all the week because then you might hear something you could understand: but this would not suit his reference, if he could be understood, he would not be a great preacher, for a great preacher, according to the opinion of some, is a man who is called intellectual—that is to say, a man who knows more about the Bible than the Bible knows about itself, a man who can explain all mysteries by intellect merely, who smiles at anything like unction and savor, or the influence of God's Spirit as being mere fanaticism. Intellect with him is everything. You sit and hear him, you go out, "Dear me, what a remarkable man he is. I suppose he made something out of the text, but I did not know what it was. He seemed to me to be in a fog himself although I admit it was an extremely luminous haze." Then people will go again, and be sure to take a pew in that church, because they say he is such a clever man. The only reason is because they cannot understand him. In reading the other day a book of advice to ministers, I found it stated, and very gravely too, by some good old tutor of a college, "Always have one part of your sermon which the vulgar cannot comprehend, because in that way you will have a name for learning, and what you say that they can understand, will impress them the more, for by putting in a sentence or two which is incomprehensible, you at once strike their minds as being a superior man, and they believe in the weight and the authority of your learning, and therefore, give credence to the rest which they can comprehend." Now, I hold that is all wrong. Christ wants us not to preach *learning*, but to preach the good word of life in the simplest manner possible. Why, if I could only get lords and ladies to listen to me, by preaching to them so that they alone could understand me, there! they might go, and I would not so much as snap my finger for them all. I would desire so to preach that the servant maid can understand, that the coachman can understand, that the poor and illiterate may hear readily and gladly receive the word. And mark you, there never will be much good come to the ministry until it is simplified, until our brethren learn one language, which they do not seem to know. Latin, Greek, French, Hebrew, and twenty other languages they know. There is one I would recommend to their very serious study—it is called Anglo-Saxon. If they would just try and learn that, it is astonishing what a mighty language they would find it to move the hearts of men. Saxon before every language in the world. When every other has died out for want of power, Saxon will live, and triumph with its iron tongue,

and its voice of steel. We must have the common, plain language in which to address the people. And mark this, we must have Christ lifted up, Christ crucified, without the gauds and fripperies of learning, without the trappings of attempted eloquence or oratory. If Christ Jesus be earnestly preached he will draw all men unto him.

III. AND NOW WE GO TO THE THIRD POINT, WHICH IS, INDEED, THE ESSENCE OF THE TEXT, THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. If Christ be thus preached, thus fully held forth, thus simply proclaimed to the people, the effect will be, he will draw all men unto him. Now, I will show the attracting power of Christ in three or four ways. Christ draws *like a trumpet* attracting men to hear the proclamation. Christ draws *like a net* bringing men out of the sea of sin. Christ draws, also, *with bonds of love*. In the next place, Christ attracts *like a standard*, bringing all the soldiers round him, and, in the last place, Christ draws *like a chariot*. "I, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." Now I will try if I can show these points.

First, I said that Christ draws *as a trumpet*. Men have been wont to sound a trumpet to attract an audience to the reading of a proclamation. The people come from their houses at the well-known sound, to listen to what they are desired to know. Now, my brethren, part of the attractive power of the gospel lies in the attracting people to hear it. You cannot expect people to be blessed by the preaching of the gospel if they do not hear it. One part of the battle is to get them to listen to its sound. Now, the question is asked in these times, "How are we to get the working-classes to listen to the word?" The answer is, Christ is his own attraction, Christ is the only trumpet that you want to trumpet Christ. Preach the gospel, and the congregation will come of themselves. The only infallible way of getting a good congregation, is to do this. "Oh!" said a Socinian once, to a good Christian minister, "I cannot make it out; my chapel is always empty, and yours always crammed full. And yet I am sure mine is the more rational doctrine, and you are not by any means so talented a preacher as I am"—"Well," said the other "I will tell you the reason why your chapel is empty, and mine full. The people have a conscience, and that conscience tells them that what I preach is true and that what you preach is false, so they will not hear you." You shall look through the history of this realm ever since the commencement of the days of Protestantism, and I will dare to say it without fear of contradiction, that you will almost in every case find that the men who have attracted the greatest mass of people to hear them, have been men who were the most evangelical—who preached the most about Christ and him crucified. What was there in Whitfield to attract an audience, except the simple gospel preached with a vehement oratory that carried everything before it. Oh, It was not his oratory, but the gospel that drew the people. There is a something about the truth that always makes it popular. For tell me that if a man preaches the truth his chapel will be empty. Sir, I defy you to prove that. Christ preached his own truth, and the common people heard him gladly, and the multitude flocked to listen to him. My good ministering brother, have you got an

empty church? Do you want to fill it? I will give you a good receipt, and if you will follow it, you will, in all probability, have your chapel full to the doors. Burn all your manuscripts, that is No. 1. Give up your notes, that is No. 2. Read your Bible and preach it as you find it in the simplicity of its language. And give up all your Latinized English. Begin to tell the people what you have felt in your own heart, and beseech the Holy Spirit to make your heart as hot as a furnace for zeal. Then go out and talk to the people. Speak to them like their brother. Be a man amongst men. Tell them what you have felt and what you know, and tell it heartily with a good, bold face; and, my dear friend, I do not care who you are, you will get a congregation. But if you say, "Now, to get a congregation, I must buy an organ." That will not serve you a bit. "But we must have a good choir." I would not care to have a congregation that comes through a good choir. "No," says another, "but really I must a little alter my style of preaching." My dear friend, it is not the style of preaching, it is the style of feeling. People sometimes begin to mimic other preachers, because they are successful. Why, the worst preachers are those who mimic others, whom they look upon as standards preach naturally. Preach out of your hearts just what you feel to be true, and the old soul-stirring words of the gospel will soon draw a congregation. "Where the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."

But if it ended there, what would be the good of it? If the congregation came and listened to the sound, and then went away unsaved, of what use would it be? But in the next place, Christ acts *as a net* to draw men unto him. The gospel ministry is, in God's Word, compared to a fishery; God's ministers are the fishermen, they go to catch souls, as fishermen go to catch fish. How shall souls be caught? They shall be caught by preaching Christ. Just preach a sermon that is full of Christ, and throw it unto your congregation, as you throw a net into the sea—you need not look where they are, nor try to fit your sermon to different cases; but, throw it in, and as sure as God's Word is what it is, it shall not return to him void; it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto he hath sent it. The gospel never was unsuccessful yet, when it was preached with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. It is not fine orations upon the death of princes, or the movements of politics which will save souls. If we wish to have sinners saved and to have our churches increased; if we desire the spread of God's kingdom, the only thing whereby we can hope to accomplish the end, is the lifting up of Christ; for, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

In the next place, Christ Jesus draws *as the cords of love*. After men are saved, they are still apt to go astray; it needs a cord to reach all the way from a sinner to heaven; and it needs to have a hand pulling at him all the way. Now, Christ Jesus is the bead of love that draw, the saint to heaven. O child of God, thou wouldst go astray again if Jesus did not hold thee fast; if he did not draw thee to himself thou wouldst still, still wander. Christian people are like our earth. Our world has two forces, it has one tendency to run off at a tangent from

its orbit; but the sun draws it by a centripetal power and attracts it to itself, and so between the two forces it is kept in a perpetual circle. Oh! Christian, thou wilt never walk aright, and keep in the orbit of truth, if it be not for the influence of Christ perpetually attracting thee to the center. Thou feelest, and if thou dost not feel always, It is still there,—thou feelest an attraction between thine heart and Christ, and Christ is perpetually drawing thee to himself, to his likeness, to his character, to his love, to his bosom, and in that way thou art kept from thy natural tendency to fly off and to be lost in the wide fields of sin. Bless God, that Christ lifted up draws all his people unto him in that fashion.

And now, in the next place Christ Jesus is the center of attraction; even *as a standard* is the center of gathering. We want unity in these days; we are now crying out, “away with sectarianism.” O for unity! there are some of us who truly pant after it. We do not talk about an evangelical alliance; alliances are made between men of different countries. We believe that the phrase “Evangelical Alliance” is a faulty one,—it should be “Evangelical Union,”—knit together in Union. Why! I am not in alliance with a brother of the Church of England; I would not be in alliance with him if he were ever so good a man! I would be in union with him, I would love him with all my heart, but I would not make a mere alliance with him. He never was mine enemy, he never shall be; and, therefore, it is not an alliance I want with him,—it is a union. And so with all God’s people, they do not care about alliances; they love real union and communion one with another. Now, what is the right way to bring all the churches to union? “We must revise the prayer book,” says one. You may revise it, and revise it as long as ever you like, you will never bring some of us to agree to it, for we hate Prayer Books as such, however near perfection. “Well then, we must revise the doctrines, so that they may meet all classes.” You cannot; that is impossible. “Well then, we must revise the discipline.” Yes, sweep the Augean stable. And then after that, the mass of us will stand as much aloof as ever. “No, but we must each of us make mutual concession.” Indeed, I wonder who will, except the Vicars of Bray, who have no principle at all. For if we have to make mutual concession, who can be guarantee that I must not concede a part of what I believe to be true? And that I cannot do, nor can my brother on the opposite side. The only standard of union that can ever be lifted up in England, is the cross of Christ. As soon as we shall begin to preach Christ and him crucified, we shall be all one. We can fight anywhere except at the foot of the cross,—there it is that the order goes forth, “sheath swords;” and those that were bitter combatants before, come and prostrate themselves there, and say, “Thou dear Redeemer, thou hast melted us into one.” Oh! my brethren, let us all preach the gospel mightily, and there will be union. The church of England is becoming more united with dissenters. Our good friends at Exeter Hall have gone a very long way to bless the world, and uproot the exclusiveness of their own system. As sure as ever they are alive they have taken the most excellent step in the world to pull down the absurd pretensions of some of their own brethren, to the exclusive claim of being “the Church.” I glory and rejoice in it! I

bless God for that movement, and I pray that the day may come when every bishop may do the same. And I do not glory in it merely because I look upon it as the beginning of union, but because of the preaching of the gospel. But, at the same time, I know this, let their example be followed, and the barriers between dissenters and the church of England are not tenable. Even the nationality of Episcopacy must yet come down. If my lord, the bishop of so and so, is to have so many thousands a year for preaching to a number of people in Exeter Hall, I have as much right as he has to a State grant, for I serve as many Englishmen as he does. There is no one church in the world that has any right to take a farthing of national money any more than I have. And if there are ten thousand gathered here, it is an unrighteous thing that we should have no subsidy from the State, when a paltry congregation of thirteen and a half in the City of London is to be supported out of national money. The thing cannot be held long, it is impossible; Christ's Church will one day reject the patronage of the State. Let all of us begin to preach the gospel, and we shall soon see that the gospel is self-supporting; and that the gospel does not want entrenchments of bigotry and narrow-mindedness, in order to make it stand. No, we shall say, "brother, there is my pulpit for you. You are an Episcopalian, preach in my pulpit, you are right welcome.

The Episcopalian will say, "You are a Baptist, and my brother, there is the parish church for you." And I just announce that the first chance I get to preach in a parish church, I will do it, and risk the consequence. They are our structures, they belong to all England, we can give them to whom we please, and if to-morrow the will of the sovereign people should transfer those edifices to another denomination, there is nothing in the world that can prevent it. But if not, by what law of Christian love is one denomination to shut its pulpit doors against every other? Many of my dear friends in the Episcopal Church are willing to lend their edifices, but they dare not. But mark you? when the gospel is preached fully, all those things will be broken down. For one brother will say, "My dear friend, you preach Christ and so do I, I cannot shut you out of my pulpit." And another will cry, "I am anxious for the salvation of souls, and so are you, come into my house, come into my heart, I love you." The only means of unity we shall ever get will be all of us preaching Christ crucified; when that is done, when every minister's heart is in the right place, full of anxiety for souls—when every minister feels that, be he called bishop, presbyter, or preacher—all he wants to do is to glorify God and win souls to Jesus, then, my dear friends, we can maintain our denominational distinctions, but the great bugbear of bigotry and division will have ceased and schism will no more be known. For that day I anxiously pray, may God send it in his own time. As far as I am concerned there is my hand for every minister of God in creation, and my heart with it, I love all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ. And I feel persuaded that the nearer we all of us come to the one point of putting Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst, and Christ without end—the nearer we shall come to the unity of the one Church of Christ in the bond of holy permanence.

And now I close by noticing the last sweet thought—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Then Christ Jesus will draw all his people to heaven; he says he will draw them unto himself. He is in heaven; then *Christ is the chariot* in which souls are drawn to heaven. The people of the Lord are on their way to heaven, they are carried in everlasting arms; and those arms are the arms of Christ. Christ is carrying them up to his own house, to his own throne; by-and-by his prayer—"Father, I will that they, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am," shall be wholly fulfilled. And it is fulfilling now, for he is like a strong courser drawing his children in the chariot of the covenant of grace unto himself. Oh! blessed be God, the cross is the plank on which we swim to heaven; the cross is the great covenant transport which will weather out the storms, and reach its desired heaven. This is the chariot, the pillars where with are of gold, and the bottom thereof silver, it is lined with the purple of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, poor sinner, I would to God Christ would pardon thee; remember his death on Calvary, remember his agonies and bloody sweat—all this he did for thee; if thou feelest thyself to be a sinner. Does not this draw thee to him?

"Though thou art guilty he is good,
He'll wash thy soul in Jesus' blood."

Thou hast rebelled against him, and revolted, but he says, "return backsliding children." Will not his love draw thee? I pray that both may have their power and influence, that thou mayest be drawn to Christ now, and at last be drawn to heaven. May God give a blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

A Simple Sermon for Seeking Souls

A Sermon

(No. 140)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 12, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”—[Romans 10:13](#).

IT has been said by an eminent divine that many of us in preaching the word suppose too great knowledge in our hearers. “Very often,” says this divine, “there are in the congregation persons who are totally unacquainted with the great science of divinity. They are entire strangers to the whole system of grace and salvation.” It is proper, then, that the preacher should address himself to his hearers sometimes as if they were totally ignorant of his message, and tell it to them as a new thing, going over the whole of it as if he believed them to be ignorant of it; “For,” says this good man, “it is better to suppose too little knowledge, and so to explain the thing clearly, to the meanest comprehension, than to suppose too much, and thus to let the ignorant escape without a word of instruction.”

Now, I think, I shall not this morning err in his point of view, for I shall assume that some of my congregation, at least, are totally unacquainted with the great plan of salvation. And you that know it well, and have tried its preciousness, will bear with me, I am sure, whilst I try in the simplest words that human lips can put together to tell out the story of how men are lost, and how men are saved according to the words of my text by calling upon the name of the Lord.

Well then, we must begin at the beginning. And we must first tell our hearers, that inasmuch as our text talks of men being saved, it implies that men need saving, and we tell them that if men had been as God created them, they would have needed no saving. Adam in the garden wanted no salvation, he was perfect, pure, clean, holy, and acceptable before God. He was our representative, he stood as the representative for all the race, and when he touched the forbidden fruit, and ate of the tree of which God had said, “Thou shalt not eat thereof, or thou shalt surely die.” When he so transgressed against God, he needed a Saviour and we, his offspring through his sin, are born into this world, each of us needing a Saviour. We, who are now present, must not however throw blame on Adam; no man was ever yet damned for Adam’s sin alone. Children dying in infancy are, without doubt, saved by sovereign grace through the atonement which is in Christ Jesus. No sooner do they close their eyes to earth than being innocent of any actual sin they at once open them on the bliss of heaven. But you and I are not children. We need not talk just now of Adam’s sins. We have our own to a count for, and God knoweth they are enough. Holy Scripture tells us that we all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and conscience beareth witness to the

same truth. We have all broken the great commands of God, and in consequence thereof the just God is bound in justice to punish us for the sins we have committed. Now, my brethren, it is because you and I have broken the divine law, and are subject to the divine wrath, that we stand in need of mercy. Every one of us therefore—every one of us if we would be happy, if we would dwell in heaven with God for ever, must be saved.

But there is great confusion in the minds of men as to what being saved is. Allow me, then, just to say, that salvation means two things. It means in the first place, our escaping from the punishment of sins committed; and it means in the next place, the escaping from the habit of sin, so that in future we shall not live as we have lived. The way in which God saves you is twofold: he finds man a sinner breaking his law, he says, “I forgive you, I will not punish you. I have punished Christ instead of you—you shall be saved.” But that is only half the work. He says in the next place—“Man, I will not let you go on sinning as you have been wont to do; I will give you a new heart, which shall subdue your evil habits. So that whereas you have been the slave of sin, you shall be free to serve me. Come away, you are not going to serve that black master of yours any more, you must leave that demon, I will have you to be my child, my servant. Thou sayest, ‘I cannot do so.’ Come, I will give thee grace to do it; I give thee grace to break off drunkenness, grace to renounce thy swearing, grace to give up Sabbath-breaking; I give thee grace to run in the ways of my commandments, and to find them to be a delightful road.” Salvation, then, I say, consists of two things—deliverance on the one hand from the habit of living in enmity with God; and, on the other hand, from the punishment annexed to transgression.

The great subject of this morning, which I shall attempt to dwell upon in very plain language; attempting no flights of oratory whatever—is, how men may be saved. That is the one great question. Let them remember what to be saved is. It is to be made Christians, to have new thoughts, new minds new hearts, and then, it is to have a new home for ever at God’s right hand in bliss. How may they be saved? “What must I do to be saved?” is a cry springing from many lips here this morning. The answer of my text is this—“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” I shall first try to explain the text a little—*explanation*. Secondly, I shall try to clear the text from some errors about salvation, which are very popular—that will be *refutation*. And then, thirdly, I shall press the usefulness of my text upon your minds: that will be *exhortation*. *Explanation, refutation, exhortation*, you will remember the points, and may God impress them upon your minds!

I. First, then, EXPLANATION—What is here meant by calling upon the name of the Lord? And I tremble at this very moment, when I try to explain my text, for I feel it is very easy to darken words without knowledge.” Full many a time has a preacher rendered Scripture dark by his explanations, instead of making it brighter. Many a preacher has been like a painted window, shutting out the light, instead of admitting it. There is nothing whatever puzzles me more, and tries my mind more, than the answer to that simple question,

What is faith? What is believing? What is calling upon the name of the Lord? In order to get the true sense of this, I turned to my concordance, and looked out the passages where the same word is employed; and, so far as I can judge, I may state from the authority of Scripture, that the word “call” signifies worship, so that I might translate it thus—“Whosoever worships God shall be saved.” But you must let me explain that word “worship” according to the Scripture signification of it which must be received, in order to explain the word “call.”

To call upon the name of the Lord, in the first place, signifies to *worship God*. You will find in the book of Genesis that, “when men began to multiply upon the face of the earth, then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” That is they began to worship God, they builded altars in his name, they certified their belief in the sacrifice that was to come, by offering a typical sacrifice upon the altar they had reared, they bowed their knee in prayer; they lifted their voice in sacred song, and cried, “Great is Jehovah, Creator, Preserver, let him be praised, world without end.” Now, whosoever—whoever he may be in the wide, wide world, who is enabled by grace to worship God, in God’s way, shall be saved. If you worship him by a Mediator, having faith in the atonement of the cross, if you worship him by humble prayer and hearty praise, your worship is a proof that you shall be saved. You could not thus worship, unless you had grace within your heart, and your faith and grace are a proof that you shall have glory. Whosoever, then in lowly devotion, on the green sward, beneath the wide-spreading branches of a tree, beneath the vault of God’s heaven, or in God’s house, or out of it—whosoever shall worship God with a pure heart fervently, looking for acceptance through the atonement of Christ, and meekly casting himself upon the mercy of God, shall be saved. So stands the promise.

But lest any man should run away with a mistaken idea of what worship is, we must just explain a little further. The word “call,” in holy Scripture meaning, signifies *prayer*. You remember the case of Elijah: when the prophets of Baal roughs to get rain from the false god, he said, “I will call upon God”—that is to say, “I will pray to God that he may send the rain.” Now, prayer is a sure sign of divine life within. Whosoever prayeth to God through Christ, with sincere prayer shall be saved. Oh, I can remember how this text cheered me once. I felt the weight of sin, and I did not know the Saviour. I thought God would blast me with his wrath, and smite me with his hot displeasure! From chapel to chapel I went to hear the word preached, but never a gospel sentence did I hear; but this one text just preserved me from what I believe I should have been driven to—the commission of suicide through grief and sorrow. It was this sweet word—“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Well, I thought, I cannot believe on Christ as I could wish. I cannot find pardon, but I know I call upon his name, I know I pray, ay, and pray with groans and tears and sighs day and night; and if I am ever lost, I will plead that promise—“Oh God thou saidst, he that calleth upon thy name shall be saved; I did call; wilt thou cast me away? I did

plead thy promise; I did lift up my heart in prayer; canst thou be just, and yet damn the man who did really pray?" But mark that sweet thought: prayer is the certain forerunner of salvation. Sinner, thou canst not pray and perish; prayer and perishing are two things that never go together. I ask you not what your prayer is; it may be a groan, it may be a tear, a wordless prayer, or a prayer in broken English, ungrammatical and harsh to the ear: but if it be a prayer from the inmost heart, thou shalt be saved; or else this promise is a lie. As surely as thou prayest whoever thou mayest be whatever thy past life, whatever the transgressions in which thou hast indulged, though they be the foulest which pollute mankind, yet if from thine heart thou hast learned to pray—

“Prayer is the breath of God in man
Returning whence it came”—

And thou canst not perish with God’s breath in thee. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!”

But the word “call” signifies a little more, it signifies *trust*. A man cannot call upon the name of the Lord, unless he trusts in that name. We must have reliance upon the name of Christ, or else we have not called aright. Hear me, then, poor tried sinner; thou hast come here this morning sensible of thy guilt, awakened to thy danger; here is thy remedy. Christ Jesus the Son of God, became a man; he was “born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.” He did this to save sinners such as thou art. Wilt thou believe this? Wilt thou trust thy soul to it? Wilt thou say “Sink or swim, Christ Jesus is my hope; and if I perish I will perish with my arms around his cross, crying—

’Nothing in my hands I bring
Simply to the cross I cling?”

Poor soul, if thou canst do that, thou wilt be saved. Come, now, no good works of thine own are needed—no sacraments, all that is asked of thee is this, and that he gives thee. Thou art nothing; wilt thou take Christ to be everything? Come, thou art black, wilt thou be washed? Wilt thou down on thy knees, and cry, “Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner, not for anything I have done, or can do, but for his dear sake, whose blood streamed from his hands and feet, in whom alone I trust?” Why sinner the solid pillars of the universe shall totter rather than thou shouldst perish; ay heaven should weep a vacant throne, and an extinguished Godhead, rather than the promise should be violated in any case in the world. He that trusteth in Christ, calling on his name, shall be saved.

But once more, and then I think I shall have given you the whole scripture meaning of this. Calling on the name of the Lord signifies *professing his name*. You remember what Ananias said to Saul, afterwards called Paul, “arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.” Now, sinner if thou wouldst be obedient to Christ’s word, Christ’s word says, “He that believeth, and is *immersed*, shall be saved.” Mark, I have translated the word. King James would not have it translated. I dare not be unfaithful to my

knowledge of God's word. If it means sprinkle, let our brethren translate it "sprinkle." But they dare not do that; they know they have nothing in all classical language that would ever justify them in doing that, and they have not the impudence to attempt it. But I dare translate it—"He that believeth, and is immersed, shall be saved." And though immersion is nothing, yet God requires of men who believe that they should be immersed, in order to make a profession of their belief. Immersion is nothing, I repeat, in salvation, it is the profession of salvation; but God requires that every man that puts his trust in the Saviour should be immersed, as the Saviour was, in order to the fulfillment of righteousness. Jesus went meekly down from Jordan's shore, to be immersed beneath the wares; and so let every believer be baptized in his name. Now some of you draw back from the thought of making a profession. "No," you say, "we will believe and be secret Christians." Hear you this then—"If any man be ashamed of me, and of my words in this generation; of him will I be ashamed, when I shall come in the glory of my Father, with all his holy angels." I will repeat a truism; not one of you in your lives ever knew a secret Christian, and I will prove it to demonstration. For if you knew a man to be a Christian, it could not be a secret; for if it had been a secret how came you to know it? Then, as you never knew a secret Christian, you are not justified in believing there ever is such a one. You must come out and make a profession. What would Her Majesty think of her soldiers, if they should swear they were loyal and true, and were to say—"Your Majesty, we prefer not to wear these regimentals; let us wear the dress of civilians! We are right honest men and upright; but we do not care to stand in your ranks, acknowledged as your soldiers, we had rather slink into the enemy's camp, and into your camps too, and not wear anything that would mark us as being your soldiers!" Ah! some of you do the same with Christ. You are going to be secret Christians, are you, and slink into the devil's camp, and into Christ's camp, but acknowledged by none? Well, ye must take the chance of it, if ye will be so; but I should not like to risk it. It is a solemn threatening, "of him will I be ashamed when I come in the glory of my Father, and all his holy angels with me!" It is a solemn thing, I say, when Christ says, "Except a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." Now, then, I claim of every sinner here whom God has awakened to feel his need of a Saviour, obedience to the command of Christ, in this point, as well as in every other. Hear the way of salvation: worship, prayer, faith, profession. And the profession, if men would be obedient, if they would follow the Bible, must be done in Christ's way, by a baptism in water, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. God requireth this; and though men are saved without any baptism, and multitudes fly to heaven who are never washed in the stream, though baptism is not saving, yet if men would be saved, they must not be disobedient. And inasmuch as God gives a command, it is mine to enforce it. Jesus said, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is immersed, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

Here, then, is the explanation of my text. No churchman here can object to my interpretation. The Church of England holdeth dipping. It only saith, if children be weak they are to be sprinkled; and it is marvellous what a many weakly children there have been born lately. I am astonished to find any of you alive, after finding that so much weakness has everywhere existed! The dear little ones are so tender, that a few drops suffice instead of the dipping which their own church enforces. I would that all churchmen were better churchmen; if they would be more consistent with their own articles of faith, they would be more consistent with Scripture, and if they were a little more consistent with some of the rubrics of their own church, they would be a little more consistent with themselves. If your children are weak, you can let them be sprinkled; but if you are good churchmen you will immerse them, if they can bear it.

II. But now, the second point is REFUTATION. There are some popular errors with regard to salvation, which need to be cured by refutation. My text says, “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Now, one idea which conflicts with my text is this, *that a priest or a minister is absolutely necessary to assist men in salvation*. That idea is current in other places besides the Romish Church; there are many, alas! too many who make a dissenting minister as much their priest as the Catholic makes his priest his helper. There are many who imagine that salvation cannot be accomplished except in some undefinable and mysterious way—and the minister and the priest are mixed up with it. Hear ye then, if you had never seen a minister in your lives, if you had never heard the voice of the bishop of the church, or an elder thereof, yet if ye did call on the name of the Lord your salvation would be quite as sure without one as with one. Men cannot call upon a God they do not know. The necessity of a preacher lies in telling what the way of salvation is, for how can they hear without a preacher, and how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? But the preacher’s office goes no further than just the telling of the message, and after we have told it, God, the Holy Spirit, must apply it; for further we cannot go. Oh, take care of priestcraft, take care of mancraft, of ministercraft, of clergycraft. All God’s people are clergy, we are all God’s *cleros*, all his clergy, if we have been anointed with the Holy Spirit, and are saved. There never ought to have been a distinction between clergy and laity. We are all clergy who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are as much fit to preach the gospel, if God has given you the ability, and called you to the work by his Spirit as any man alive. No priestly hand, no hand of presbyterian—which means priest written large—no ordination of men is necessary; we stand upon the rights of manhood to speak what we believe, and next to that we stand upon the call of God’s Spirit in the heart bidding us testify his truth. But, brethren, neither Paul, nor an angel from heaven, nor Apollos, nor Cephas can help you in salvation. It is not of man, neither by men, and neither Pope, nor Archbishop, nor bishop, nor priest, nor minister, nor any one hath any grace to give to others. We must each of us go ourselves to the fountain-

head, pleading this promise—“Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord Jesus, shall be saved.” If I were shut up in the mines of Siberia, where I could never hear the gospel, if I did call upon the name of Christ the road is just as straight without the minister as with him, and the path to heaven is just as clear from the wilds of Africa, and from the dens of the prisonhouse and the dungeon, as it is from the sanctuary of God. Nevertheless for edification, all Christians love the ministry, though not for salvation; though neither in priest nor preacher do they trust, yet the word of God is sweet to them, and beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace.”

Another very common error is, that a good dream is a most splendid thing in order to save people. Some of you do not know the extent to which this error prevails. I happen to know it. It is received among many persons, that if you dream that you see the Lord in the night you will be saved, and if you can see him on the cross, or if you think you see some angels, or if you dream that God says to you, “You are forgiven, all is well;” but if you do not have a very nice dream you cannot be saved. So some people think. Now, if it be so, the sooner we all begin to eat opium the better; because there is nothing that makes people dream so much as that, and the best advice I could give would be—let every minister distribute opium very largely, and then his people would all dream themselves into heaven. But, out upon that rubbish; there is nothing in it. Dreams, the disordered fabrics of a wild imagination; the totterings often of the fair pillars of a grand conception; how can they be the means of salvation? You know Rowland Hill’s good answer; I must quote it, in default of a better. When a woman pleaded that she was saved because she dreamed, he said, “Well, my good woman, it is very nice to have good dreams when you are asleep; but I want to see how you act when you are awake; for if your conduct is not consistent in religion when you are awake I will not give a snap of the finger for your dreams.” Ah, I do marvel that ever any person should go to such a depth of ignorance as to tell me the stories that I have heard myself about dreams. Poor dear creatures, when they were sound asleep they saw the gates of heaven opened, and a white angel came and washed their sins away, and then they saw that they were pardoned; and since then they have never had a doubt or a fear. It is time that you should begin to doubt, then very good time that you should; for if that is all the hope you have, it is a poor one. Remember it is, “whosoever calls upon the name of God,” not whosoever dreams about him. Dreams may do good. Sometimes people have been frightened out of their senses in them; and they were better out of their senses than they were in, for they did more mischief when they were in their senses than they did when they were out; and the dreams did good in that sense. Some people, too, have become alarmed by dreams; but to trust to them is to trust to a shadow, to build your hopes on bubbles, scarcely needing a puff of wind to burst them into nothingness. Oh! remember, you want no vision, no marvellous appearance. If you have had a vision or a dream, you need not

despise it; it may have benefitted you: but do not trust to it. But if you have had none, remember that is the mere calling upon God's name to which the promise is appended.

And now, once again, there are others, very good sort of people too, that have been laughing while I was talking about dreams, and now it is our turn to laugh at them. There are some people who think they must have some very wonderful kind of feelings, or else they cannot be saved; some most extraordinary thoughts such as they never had before, or else certainly they cannot be saved. A woman once applied to me for admission to church-membership. So I asked her whether she had ever had a change of heart. She said, "Oh yes sir, such a change as you know," she said, "I felt it across the chest so singular, sir; and when I was a praying one day I felt as if I did not know what was the matter with me, I felt so different. And when I went to the chapel, sir, one night, I came away and felt so different from what I felt before, so light." "Yes," I said "light-headed, my dear soul, that is what you felt, but nothing more, I am afraid." The good woman was sincere enough; she thought it was all right with her, because something had affected her lungs, or in some way stirred her physical frame. "No," I hear some of you say, "people cannot be so stupid as this." I assure you that if you could read the hearts of this present congregation, you would find there are hundreds here that have no better hope of heaven than that, for I am dealing with a very popular objection just now. "I thought," said one addressing me one day, "I thought when I was in the garden, sure Christ could take my sins away, just as easily as he could move the clouds. Do you know, sir, in a moment or two the cloud was all gone, and the sun was shining. Thought I to myself, the Lord is blotting out my sin." Such a ridiculous thought as that, you say, cannot occur often. I tell you, it does, very frequently indeed. People get supposing that the veriest nonsense in all the earth is a manifestation of divine grace in their hearts, Now, the only feeling I ever want to have is just this,—I want to feel that I am a sinner and that Christ is my Saviour. You may keep your visions, and ecstasies and raptures, and dancings to yourselves; the only feeling that I desire to have is deep repentance and humble faith; and if, poor sinner, you have got that, you are saved. Why, some of you believe that before you can be saved there must be a kind of electric-shock, some very wonderful thing that is to go all through you from head to foot. Now hear this, "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart. If thou dost with thy heart believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and with thy mouth dost confess, thou shalt be saved." What do ye want with all this nonsense of dreams and supernatural thoughts? All that is wanted is, that as a guilty sinner I should come and cast myself on Christ. That done, the soul is safe, and all the visions in the universe could not make it safer.

And now, I have one more error to try to rectify. Among very poor people—and I have visited some of them, and know what I say to be true, and there are some here, and I will speak to them,—among the very poor and uneducated, there is a very current idea that somehow or other salvation is connected with learning to read and write. You smile, perhaps,

but I know it. Often has a poor woman said, “Oh! sir, this is no good to poor ignorant creatures like us; there is no hope for me, sir; I cannot read. Do you know, sir, I don’t know a letter? I think if I could read a bit I might be saved; but, ignorant as I am, I do not know how I call: for I have got no understanding, sir.” I have found this in the country districts too, among people who might learn to read if they liked. And there are none but can, unless they are lazy. And yet they sit down in cold indifference about salvation, under the notion that the parson could be saved, for he reads a chapter so nicely; that the clerk could be saved, for he said “Amen” so well; that the squire could be saved, for he knew a great deal, and had a vast many books in his library, but that they could not be saved, for they did not know anything, and that therefore it was impossible. Now, have I one such poor creature here? I will speak plainly to you. My poor friend, you do not want to know much to go to heaven. I would advise you to know as much as ever you can; do not be backward in trying to learn. But in regard to going to heaven, the way is so plain that “the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” Do you feel that you have been guilty, that you have broken God’s commandments that you have not kept his Sabbath, that you have taken his name in vain that you have not loved your neighbor as yourself, nor your God with all your heart. Well, if you feel it, Christ died for such as you; he died upon the cross, and was punished in your stead, and he tells you to believe it. If you want to hear more about it, come to the house of God and listen, and we will try to lead you to something else. But remember, all you want to know to get to heaven is the two things that begin with S.—Sin and Saviour. Do you feel your sin? Christ is your Saviour trust to him pray to him; and as sure as you are here now, and I am talking to you, you will one day be in heaven. I will tell you two prayers to pray. First, pray this prayer,—“Lord, show me myself.” That is an easy one for you. Lord, show me myself, show me my heart, show me my guilt; show me my danger, Lord, show me myself. And, when you have prayed that prayer, and God has answered it, (and remember, he hears prayer) when he has answered it, and shown you yourself, here is another prayer for you,—“Lord, show me *thyself*: Show me thy work, thy love, thy mercy, thy cross, thy grace.” Pray that, and those are about the only prayers you want to pray, to get to heaven with,—“Lord, show me myself;” “Lord, show me thyself.” You do not want to know much, then. You need not spell, to get to heaven; you need not be able to speak English, to get to heaven; the ignorant and rude are welcome to the cross of Christ and salvation.

Excuse my thus answering these popular errors; I answer them because they *are* popular, and popular among some who are present. O men and women, hear the word of God once more. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Man of eighty, child of eight, young man and maiden, rich, poor, literate, illiterate, to you is this preached in all its fullness and freeness, yea, to every creature under heaven “whosoever” (and that shuts out none,) “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

III. And now I have nothing to do except to finish with EXHORTATION. My exhortation is, I intreat you by the name of God believe the message which this day I declare from God's word. Do not turn away from me because the message is simply delivered, do not reject it because I have chosen to preach it simply and plainly to the poor, but hearken again, "Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I beseech you believe this. Does it seem hard to believe? Nothing is too hard for the Most High. Do you say, "I have been so guilty, I cannot think God will save me?" Hear Jehovah speak: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my thoughts above your thoughts, my ways above your ways." Do you say, "I am excluded. Surely, you cannot mean that he would save me?" Hark you; it says, "Whosoever"—"whosoever" is a great wide door, and lets in big sinners. Oh, surely, if it says, "whosoever," you are not excluded if you call—there is the point.

And now come, I must plead with you, and I will use a few reasons to induce you to believe this truth. They shall be Scripture reasons May God bless them to you, sinner. If thou callest on Christ's name thou wilt be saved. I will tell thee first, thou wilt be saved because *thou art elect*. No man ever called on Christ's name yet who was not elected. That doctrine of election which puzzles many and frightens more, never need do so. If you believe, you are elect, if you call on the name of Christ you are elect, if you feel yourself to be a sinner, and put your trust in Christ you are elect. Now, the elect must be saved, for them there is no perdition. God has predestinated them unto eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hands. God does not choose men, and then cast them away; he does not elect them, and then cast them into the pit. Now, you are elect, you could not have called if you had not been elected your election is the cause of your calling, and inasmuch as you have called, and do call upon the name of God, you are God's elect. And from his book not death nor hell can ever erase your name. 'Tis an omnipotent decree. Jehovah's will be done! His chosen must be saved, though earth and hell oppose, his strong hand shall break *their* ranks, and lead his people through. You are one of these people. You shall at last stand before his throne, and see his smiling face in glory ever lasting, because you are elect.

Now, another reason. If thou callest upon the name of the Lord thou shalt be saved, because *thou art redeemed*. Christ has bought thee, and paid for thee, poured out the hottest of his heart's blood to buy thy ransom, split his heart, and riven it to splinters to buy thy soul from wrath. Thou art a bought one, thou knowest it not, but I see the blood-mark on thy brow. If thou callest on his name though thou hast as yet no comfort, yet Christ has called thee his own. E'er since that day when he said "It is finished,"—Christ has said, "My delight is in him, for I have bought him with my blood," and because thou art bought thou shalt never perish. Not one of Jesus' blood-bought ones was ever lost yet. Howl, howl, O hell, but howl thou canst not over the damnation of a redeemed soul. Out upon the horrid

doctrine that men are bought with blood, and yet are damned, it is too diabolical for me to believe. I know that what the Saviour did he did, and if he did redeem he did redeem, and those redeemed by him are positively redeemed from death and hell and wrath. I can never bring my mind to the unrighteous idea that Christ was punished for a man, and that such a man will be punished again. I never could see how Christ could stand in a man's stead and be punished for him, and yet that man be punished again. No, inasmuch as thou callest on God's name there is proof that Christ is thy ransom. Come, rejoice! If he was punished, God's justice cannot demand a double vengeance, first, at the bleeding Surety's hands and then again at thine. Come, soul put thine hand upon the Saviour's head, and say "Blest Jesus, thou wast punished for me." Oh, God, I am not afraid of thy vengeance. When my hand is on the atonement, smite, but thou must smite me through thy Son. Smite, if thou wilt, but thou canst not for thou hast smitten him, and sure thou wilt not smite again for the same offense. What! Did Christ at one tremendous draught of love, drink my damnation dry? and shall I be damned after that? God forbid! What! shall God be unrighteous forget the Redeemer's work for us and let the Saviour's blood be shed in vain? Not hell itself has ever indulged the thought which has only been worthy of the men who are traitors to God's truth. Ay, brethren, if ye call on Christ, if ye pray, if ye believe, ye may be quite sure of salvation, for ye are redeemed, and the redeemed must not perish.

Shall I tell you one more reason? Believe this truth: it must be true. For it ye call upon the name of God, "In my Father's house," says Christ, "there are many mansions," and there is one there for you. Christ has prepared a house and a crown, from before the foundation of the world, for all them that believe. Come! dost thou think Christ will prepare a house, and not carry the inhabitant there? Will he make crowns, and then lose the heads that are to wear them! God forbid! Turn thine eye towards heaven. There is a seat there that must be filled, and must be filled by thee; there is a crown there that must be worn, and must be worn by thee. Oh! be of good cheer: heavens preparation shall not be too abundant, he shall make room for those that believe, and because he hath made that room those that believe shall come there. Oh! I would to God I might know that some soul could lay hold on this promise! Where are you? Are you standing away among the crowd there, or sitting here in the body of the hall or in the topmost gallery? Are you feeling your sins? Do you shed tears in secret on account of them? Do you lament your iniquities? Oh! take his promise—"Whosoever (sweet whosoever!)—whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Say thus. The devil says it is of no use for you to call; you have been a drunkard. Tell him it says, "Whosoever," "Nay," says the evil spirit, "it is of no use for you, you have never been to hear a sermon, or been in the house of God these last ten years." Tell him it says, "Whosoever." "No," says Satan, "remember the sins of last night, and how you have come up to the MUSIC HALL stained with lust." Tell the devil it says, "Whosoever," and that it is a foul falsehood of his, that you can call on God and yet be lost. No; tell him that—

“If all the sins that men have done
In thought, or word, or deed,
Since worlds were made or time begun,
Could meet on one poor head,
The blood of Jesus Christ alone
For all this guilt could well atone.”
Oh lay this to thine heart. May God’s Spirit do it! “Whosoever calleth upon the name
of the Lord shall be saved.”

Substitution

A Sermon

(No. 141-142)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 19th, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—[2 Corinthians 5:21](#).

A BOOK is the expression of the thoughts of the writer. The book of nature is an expression of the thoughts of God. We have God’s terrible thoughts in the thunder and lightning; God’s loving thoughts in the sunshine and the balmy breeze; God’s bounteous, prudent, careful thoughts in the waving harvest and in the ripening meadow. We have God’s brilliant thoughts in the wondrous scenes which are beheld from mountain-top and valley; and we have God’s most sweet and pleasant thoughts of beauty in the little flowers that blossom at our feet. But you will remark that God has in nature given most prominence to those thoughts that needed to have the pre-eminence. He hath not given us broad acres overspread with *flowers*, for they were not needed in such abundance, but he hath spread the fields with corn, that thus the absolute necessities of life might be supplied. We needed most of the thoughts of his providence; and he hath quickened our industry, so that God’s providential care may be read as we ride along the roads on every side. Now, God’s book of grace is just like his book of nature; it is his thoughts written out. This great book, the Bible, this most precious volume is the heart of God made legible; it is the gold of God’s love beaten out into leaf gold, so that therewith our thoughts might be plated, and we also might have golden, good, and holy thoughts concerning him. And you will mark that, as in nature so in grace, the most necessary is the most prominent. I see in God’s word a rich abundance of flowers of glorious eloquence; often I find a prophet marshalling his words like armies for might, and like kings for majesty. But far more frequently I read simple declarations of the truth. I see here and there a brilliant thought of beauty, but I find whole fields of plain didactic doctrine, which is food for the soul; and I find whole chapters full of Christ which is divine manna, whereon the soul doth feed. I see starry words to make the Scriptures brilliant, sweet thoughts to make them fair, great thoughts to make them impressive, terrible thoughts to make them awful; but necessary thoughts, instructive thoughts, saving thoughts, are far more frequent, because far more necessary. Here and there a bed of flowers, but broad acres of living corn of the gospel of the grace of God. You must excuse me, then, if I very frequently dwell on the whole topic of salvation. But last Sabbath I brought you one shock of this wheat, in the fashion of Christ’s promise, which saith, “He that calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” And then I sought to show how men might be saved. I bring you now another shock

cut down in the self same field, teaching you the great philosophy of salvation, the hidden mystery, the great secret, the wonderful discovery which is brought to light by the gospel; how God is just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Let us read the text again, and then at once proceed to discuss it. I intend to do to-day, as I did last Sunday; I shall just be as simple as ever I can; and I shall not attempt one single flight of eloquence or oratory, even if I am capable of it; but just go along the ground, so that every simple soul may be able to understand.—“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Note the doctrine; the use of it; the enjoyment of it.

I. First, THE DOCTRINE. There are three persons mentioned here. “*He (that is God) hath made him (that is Christ) who knew no sin, to be sin for us (sinners) that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*” Before we can understand the plan of salvation, it is necessary for us to know something about the three persons, and, certainly, unless we understand them in some measure, salvation is to us impossible.

1. Here is first, GOD. Let every man know what God is. God is a very different Being from what some of you suppose. The God of heaven and of earth—the Jehovah of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, Creator and Preserver, the God of Holy Scripture, and the God of all grace, is not the God that some men make unto themselves, and worship. There be men in this so called Christian land, who worship a god who is no more God than Venus or Bacchus! A god made after their own hearts; a god not fashioned out of stone or wood, but fashioned from their own thoughts, out of baser stuff than ever heathen attempted to make a god of. The God of Scripture has three great attributes, and they are all three implied in the text.

The God of Scripture is a *sovereign* God; that is, he is a God who has absolute authority, and absolute power to do exactly as he pleaseth. Over the head of God there is no law, upon his arm there is no necessity; he knoweth no rule but his own free and mighty will. And though he cannot be unjust, and cannot do anything but good, yet is his nature absolutely free; for goodness is the freedom of God’s nature. God is not to be controlled by the will of man, nor the desires of man, nor by fate in which the superstitious believe; he is God, doing as he willeth in the armies of heaven, and in this lower world. He is a God, too, who giveth no account of his matters; he makes his creatures just what he chooses to make them, and does with them just as he wills. And if any of them resent his acts, he saith unto them:—“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” God is good; but God is sovereign, absolute, knowing, nothing that can control him. The monarchy of this world, is no constitutional and limited monarchy; it is not tyrannical, but it is absolutely in the hands of an all-wise God. But mark, it is in no hands but his; no cherubim, not seraphim can assist God in the dispensation of his government.

“He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”

He is the God of predestination; the God upon whose absolute will, the hinge of fate doth turn.

“Chain’d to his throne, a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel’s form and size,
Drawn by th’ eternal pen.
His providence unfolds the book,
And makes his councils shine,
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,
Fulfils some deep design.”

This is the God of the Bible, this is the God whom we adore; no weak, pusillanimous God, who is controlled by the will of men, who cannot steer the bark of providence; but a God unalterable, infinite, unerring. This is the God we worship; a God as infinitely above his creatures, as the highest thought an fly; and higher still than that.

But, again, the God who is here mentioned, is a *God of infinite justice*. That he is a sovereign God, I prove from the words, that he *hath made* Christ to be sin. He could not have done it if he had not been sovereign. That he is a just God, I infer from my text; seeing that the way of salvation is a great plan of satisfying justice. And we now declare that the God of Holy Scripture is a God of inflexible justice; he is not the God whom some of you adore. You adore a god who winks at great sins; you believe in a god who calls your crimes peccadilloes and little faults. Some of you worship a god who does not punish sin; but who is so weakly merciful, and so mercilessly weak, that he passes by transgression and iniquity, and never enacts a punishment. You believe in a god, who, if man sins, does not demand punishment for his offense. You think that a few good works of your own will pacify him, that he is so weak a ruler, that a few good words uttered before him in prayer will win sufficient merit to reverse the sentence, if, indeed, you think he ever passes a sentence at all. Your god is no God; he is as much a false god as the god of the Greeks, or of ancient Nineveh. The God of Scripture is one who is inflexibly severe in justice, and will by no means clear the guilty. “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power; and will not at all acquit the wicked.” The God of Scripture is a ruler, who, when his subjects rebel, marks their crime, and never forgives them until he has punished it, either upon them, or upon their substitute. He is not like the god of some sectaries, who believe in a god without an atonement, with only some little show upon the cross, which was not, as they say, a real suffering of sin. Their god, the god of the Socinian, just blots out sin without exacting any punishment; he is not the God of the Scriptures. The God of the Bible is as severe as if he were unmerciful, and as just as

if he were not gracious; and yet he is as gracious and as merciful as if he were not just—yea, more so.

And one more thought here concerning God, or else we cannot establish our discourse upon a sure basis. The God who is here means, is a *God of grace*: think not that I am now contradicting myself. The God who is inflexibly severe, and never pardons sin without punishment, is yet a God of illimitable love. Although as a Ruler he will chastise, yet, as the Father-God, he loveth to bestow his blessing. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but had rather that he should turn unto me and live.” God is love in its highest degree. He is love rendered more than love. Love is not God, but God is love; he is full of grace, he is the plenitude of mercy,—he delighteth in mercy. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts of love above our thoughts of despair; and his ways of grace above our ways of fear. This God, in whom these three great attributes harmonize—illimitable sovereignty, inflexible justice, and unfathomable grace—these three make up the main attributes of the one God of heaven and earth whom Christians worship. It is this God, before whom we must appear; it is he who has made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin.

2. Thus, we have brought the first person before you. The second person of our text is *the Son of God*—Christ, who knew no sin. He is the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds: begotten, not made; being of the same substance with the Father, co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent. Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son Almighty. Is the Father infinite? So is the Son infinite. He is very God of very God: having a dignity not inferior to the Father, but being equal to him in every respect,—God over all, blessed for evermore. Jesus Christ also, is the son of Mary, a man like unto ourselves. A man subject to all the infirmities of human nature, except the infirmities of sin; a man of suffering and of woe; of pain and trouble; of anxiety and fear; of trouble and of doubt; of temptation and of trial; of weakness and death. He is a man just as we are, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Now, the person we wish to introduce to you, is this complex being, God and man. Not God humanized, not man Deified; but God, purely, essentially God; man, purely man; man, not more than man; God, not less than God,—the two standing in a sacred union together, the God-Man. Of this God in Christ, our text says that he knew no sin. It does not say that he did not sin; that we know: but it says more than that; he did not *know* sin; he knew not what sin was. He saw it in others, but he did not know it by experience. He was a perfect stranger to it. It is not barely said, that he did not take sin into his heart; but, he did not know it. It was no acquaintance of his. He was the acquaintance of grief; but he was not the acquaintance of sin. He knew no sin of any kind,—no sin of thought, no sin of birth, no original, no actual transgression; no sin of lip, or of hand, did ever Christ commit. He was pure, perfect, spotless; like his own divinity, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. This gracious person, is he who is spoken of in the text. He was a person utterly incapable of committing anything

that was wrong. It has been asserted lately, by some ill-judged one, that Christ was capable of sin. I think it was Irving who started some such idea, that if Christ was not capable of sinning, he could not have been capable of virtue. "For," say they, "if a man must necessarily be good, there is no virtue in his goodness." Out upon their ridiculous nonsense. Is not God necessarily good? And who dares deny that God is virtuous? Are not the glorified spirits in heaven necessarily pure? and yet are they not holy because of that very necessity? Are not the angels, now that they are confirmed, necessarily faultless? and shall any one dare to deny angelic virtue! The thing is not true; it needs no freedom in order to create virtue. Freedom and virtue generally go together; but necessity and virtue are as much brother and sister as freedom and virtue. Jesus Christ was not capable of sin; it was as utterly impossible for Christ to have sinned, as for fire to drown or for water to burn. I suppose both of these things might be possible under some peculiar circumstances; but it never could have been possible for Christ to have committed or to have endured the shadow of the commission of a sin. He did not know it. He knew no sin.

3. Now I have to introduce the third person. We will not go far for him. The third person is *the sinner*. And where is he? Will you turn your eyes within you, and look for him, each one of you? He is not very far from you. He has been a drunkard: he has committed drunkenness and revelling and such like, and we know that the man who committeth these things, hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God. There is another, he has taken God's name in vain; he has sometimes, in his hot passion, asked God to do most fearful things against his limbs and against his soul. Ah! there is the sinner. Where is he? I hear that man, with tearful eye, and with sobbing voice exclaim, "Sir, he is here!" Methinks I see some woman here, in the midst of us, some of us have accused her perhaps, and she standeth alone trembling, and saith not a word for herself. Oh! that the Master might say, "neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." I believe, I must believe, that somewhere amongst these many thousands, I hear some palpitating heart, and that heart, as it beats so hurriedly crieth, "Sin, sin, sin, wrath, wrath, how can I get deliverance?" Ah! thou art the man, a born rebel; born into the world a sinner, thou hast added to thy native guilt thine own transgressions. Thou hast broken the commandments of God, thou hast despised God's love, thou hast trampled on his grace, thou hast gone on hitherto until now, the arrow of the Lord is drinking up thy spirit; God hath made thee tremble, he hath made thee to confess thy guilt and thy transgression. Hear me, then, if your convictions are the work of God's Spirit, you are the person intended in the text, when it says, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we"—that is you—"might be made the righteousness of God in him."

I have introduced *the persons*, and now I must introduce you to *a scene* of a great exchange which is made according to the text. The third person whom we introduce is *the prisoner at the bar*. As a sinner, God, has called him before him, he is about to be tried for life or death. God is gracious, and he desires to save him; God is just, and he must punish

him. The sinner is to be tried; if there be a verdict of guilty brought in against him, how will the two conflicting attributes work in God's mind? He is loving, he wants to save him; he is just, he must destroy him! How shall this mystery be solved, and the riddle be solved? Prisoner at the bar, canst thou plead "Not Guilty?" He stands speechless; or, if he speaks, he cries, "I am Guilty!"

Shouldst thou smite my soul to hell,

Thy righteous law approves it well.

Then, you see, if he has pleaded guilty himself, there is no hope of there being any flaw in the evidence. And even if he had pleaded "not guilty," yet the evidence is most clear, for God, the Judge, has seen his sin, and recorded all his iniquities; so that there would be no hope of his escaping. The prisoner is sure to be found guilty. How can he escape? Is there a flaw in the indictment? No! it is drawn up by infinite wisdom, and dictated by eternal justice; and there is no hope there. Can he turn king's evidence? Ah! if we could be saved by turning king's evidence, we should all of us be saved. There is an anomaly in our law which often allows the greater criminal to escape, whilst the lesser criminal is punished. If the one is dastard and coward enough by betraying his comrade he may save himself. If you turn to the *Newgate Calendar*—if any of you have patience enough to read so vile a piece of literature—you will see that the greatest of two murderers has escaped whilst the other has been hanged, because he turned king's evidence. You have told of your fellows; you have said, "Lord, I thank thee, I am not as other men; I am not as that adulterer, or even as that publican. I bless thee, I am not like my neighbor, who is an extortioner, a thief, and so on." You are telling against your neighbor; you are joint sinners, and you are telling a tale against him. There is no hope for you; God's law knows of no such injustice as a man escaping by turning informer upon others. How then shall the prisoner at the bar escape? Is there any possibility? Oh! how did heaven wonder! how did the stars stand still with astonishment! and how did the angels stay their songs a moment, when for the first time, God showed how he might be just, and yet be gracious! Oh! I think I see heaven astonished, and silence in the courts of God for the space of an hour, when the Almighty said, "Sinner. I must and will punish thee on account of sin! But I love thee; the bowels of my love yearn over thee. How can I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My justice says 'smite,' but my love stays my hand, and says, 'spare, spare the sinner!' Oh! sinner, my heart hath devised it; my Son, the pure and perfect shall stand in thy stead, and be accounted guilty, and thou, the guilty, shall stand in my Son's stead and be accounted righteous!" It would make us leap upon our feet in astonishment if we did but understand this thoroughly—the wonderful mystery of the transposition of Christ and the sinner. Let me put it so plainly that every one can understand: Christ was spotless; sinners were vile. Says Christ "My father, treat me as if I were a sinner; treat the sinner as if he were me. Smite as sternly as thou pleasest, for I will bear it, and thus the bowels of thy love may overflow with grace, and yet thy justice be

unsullied, for the sinner is no sinner now.” He stands in Christ’s stead, and with the Saviour’s garments on, he is accepted.” Do you say that such an exchange as this is unjust? Will you say that God should not have made his Son a substitute for us, and have let us go? Let me remind you it was purely voluntary on the part of Christ. Christ was willing to stand in our stead; he had to drink the cup of our punishment, but he was quite willing to do it. And let me tell you yet one more unanswerable thing, the substitution of Christ was not an unlawful thing, because the sovereign God made him a substitute. We have read in history of a certain wife whose attachment to her husband was so great, that the wife has gone into the prison and exchanged clothes with him; and while the prisoner was escaping, the wife has remained in the prison-house; and so the prisoner has escaped by a kind of surreptitious substitution. In such a case there was a clear breach of law, and the prisoner escaping might have been pursued and again imprisoned. But in this case the substitution was made by the highest authority. The text says, God “hath made him to be sin for us;” and inasmuch as Christ did stand in my room, place, and stead, he did not make the exchange unlawfully. It was with the full determinate counsel of Almighty God, as well as with his own consent, that Christ stood in the sinner’s place, as the sinner doth now in Christ’s place. Old Martin Luther was a man for speaking a thing pretty plainly, and sometimes he spoke the truth so plainly that he made it look very much like a lie. In one of his sermons he said, “Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived.” Now, Christ never was a sinner, but yet Martin was right. He meant to say, all the sins of Christ’s people were taken off them and put on Christ’s head, and so Christ stood in God’s sight as if he had been the greatest sinner that ever lived. He never was a sinner; he never knew sin; but good Martin, in his zeal to make men understand what it was, said, “Sinner, you became Christ; Christ, you became a sinner!” It is not quite the truth; the sinner is treated as if he were Christ, and Christ is treated as if he were the sinner. That is what is meant by the text God “hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Let me just give you two illustrations of this. The first shall be taken from the Old Testament. When, of old, men did come before God with sin, God provided a sacrifice which should be the representative of Christ, inasmuch as the sacrifice died instead of the sinner. The law ran, “He that sins shall die.” When men had committed sin they brought a bullock or a sheep before the altar; they put their hand on the bullock’s head and acknowledged their guilt; and by that deed their guilt was typically removed from themselves to the bullock. Then, the poor bullock, which had done no wrong, was slaughtered, and cast out as a sin offering, which God had rejected. That is what every sinner must do with Christ, if he is to be saved. A sinner, by faith, comes and puts his hand on Christ’s head, and confessing all his sin, it is not his any longer, it is put on Christ. Christ hangs upon the tree; he bears the cross and endures the shame; and so the sin is all gone and cast into the depths of the sea. Take another illustration. We read in the New Testament, that “the Church (that is, the

people of God) is Christ's bride." We all know that, according to the law, the wife may have many debts; but no sooner is she married than her debts cease to be hers, and become her husband's at once. So that if a woman be overwhelmed with debt, so that she is in daily fear of the prison, let her but once stand up and give her hand to a man and become his wife, and there is none in the world can touch her; the husband is liable for all, and she says to her creditor, "Sir, I owe you nothing; my husband did not owe you anything; I incurred the debt; but, inasmuch as I have become his wife, my debts are taken off from me, and become his." It is even so with the sinner and Christ. Christ marieth the sinner and putteth forth his hand, and taketh the Church to be his. She is in debt to God's justice immeasurably; she owes to God's vengeance an intolerable weight of wrath and punishment; Christ says, "Thou art my wife: I have chosen thee, and I will pay thy debts." And he has paid them, and got his full discharge. Now, whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus hath peace with God, because "he hath made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

And now, I shall have finished the explanation of the text, when I just bid you *remember the consequences of this great substitution*. Christ was made sin; we are made the righteousness of God. It was in the past, long further back than the memory of angels can reach—it was in the dark past, before cherubim or seraphim had flapped the unnavigated ether—when as yet worlds were not, and creation had not a name, God foresaw the sin of man, and planned his redemption. An eternal covenant was formed between the Father and the Son; wherein the Son did stipulate to suffer for his elect; and the Father on his part, did covenant to justify them through the Son. Oh, wondrous covenant, thou art the source of all the streams of atoning love. Eternity rolled on, time came, and with it soon came the fall, and then when many years had run their round the fullness of time arrived, and Jesus prepared to fulfill his solemn engagement. He came into the world, and was made a man. From that moment, when he became a man; mark the change that was wrought in him. Before, he had been entirely happy; he had never been miserable never sad; but now as the effects of that terrible covenant, which he had made with God, his Father begins to pour wrath upon him. What, you say does God actually account his Son to be a sinner? Yes, he does; His Son agreed to be the substitute, to stand in the sinner's stead. God begins with him at his birth; he puts him in a manger. If he had considered him as a perfect man, he would have provided him a throne: but considering him as a sinner, he subjects him to woe and poverty from beginning to end. And now see him grown to manhood; see him—griefs pursue him, sorrows follow him. Stop, griefs, why follow ye the perfect? why pursue ye the immaculate? Justice, why dost thou not drive these griefs away?—"the pure should be peaceful, and the immaculate should be happy." The answer comes: "This man is pure in himself, but he has made himself impure by taking his people's sin." Guilt is imputed to him, and the very imputation of guilt brings grief with all its reality. At last, I see death coming with more than its usual horrors;

I see the grim skeleton with his dart well sharpened; I see behind him, Hell. I mark the grim prince of darkness, and all the avengers uprising from their place of torment; I see them all besetting the Saviour; I notice their terrible war upon him in the garden; I note him as he lies there wallowing in his blood in fearful soul-death. I see him as in grief and sorrow, he walks to Pilate's bar; I see him mocked and spit upon; I behold him tormented, maltreated, and blasphemed; I see him nailed to the cross; I behold the mocking continued, and the shame unabated; I mark him shrieking for water, and I hear him complaining of the forsakings of God! I am astonished. Can this be just that a perfect being should suffer thus?—Oh, God, where art thou, that thou canst thus permit the oppression of the innocent? Hast thou ceased to be King of Justice, else why dost thou not shield the perfect One? The answer comes: Be still; he is perfect in himself, but he is the sinner now—he stands in the sinner's stead; the sinner's guilt is on him, and, therefore it is right, it is just, it is what he hath himself agreed to, that he should be punished as if he were a sinner, that he should be frowned upon, that he should die, and that he should descend to *Hades* unblest, uncomforted, unhelped, unhonored, and unowned. This was one of the effects of the great change which Christ made.

And, now, take the other side of the question, and I have done with explanation. What was the effect on *us*? Do you see that sinner there dabbling his hand in lust, defiling his garments with every sin the flesh had ever indulged in? Do you hear him cursing God? Do you mark him breaking every ordinance that God hath rendered sacred? But do you see him in a little season pursuing his way to heaven? He has renounced these sins; he has been converted, and has forsaken them; he is going on the way to heaven. Justice, art thou asleep? That man has broken thy law; is he to go to heaven? Hark, how the fiends come rising from the pit and cry—“That man deserves to be lost; he may not be now what he used to be, but his past sins, must have vengeance.” And, yet there he goes safely on his way to heaven, and I see him looking back on all the fiends that accuse him. He cries out, “Behold, who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” And when one would think all hell would be up in arms and accuse, the grim tyrant lieth still, and the fiends have nought to say; and I see him turning his face heavenward to the throne of God, and hear him cry “Who is he that condemneth?” as with unblushing countenance he challengeth the Judge. Oh! justice, where art thou? This man has been a sinner, a rebel; why not smite him to the dust for his impertinent presumption in thus challenging the justice of God? Nay, says Justice, he hath been a sinner, but I do not look upon him in that light now; I have punished Christ instead of him: that sinner is no sinner now—he is perfect. How? perfect! Perfect, because Christ was perfect, and I look upon him as if he were Christ. Though in himself all black as the gates of Kedar, I consider him to be fair as the curtains of Solomon. I make Christ the sinner, and I punish Christ; I make the sinner Christ, and I magnify and exalt him. And I will put a crown of pure gold upon his head, and by-and-bye, I will give him a place among them that

are sanctified, where he shall, harp in hand, for ever praise the name of the Lord. This is the grand result to sinners of the great exchange. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

II. Now, I have to come towards the close, to my second point, upon which I shall be brief but laborious. WHAT IS THE USE OF THIS DOCTRINE? Turn to the Scriptures and you will see. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for God, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, for"—here is our grand argument—"He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." Men and brethren, I am about to pray to you; I am about to beseech and exhort you; may the Spirit of God help me to do it with all the earnestness which becomes me. You and I shall face each other soon before the bar of the great judge, and I shall be responsible in the day of account for all I preach to you; not for my style or talent, or want of talent, I shall only be responsible for my earnestness and zeal in this matter. And, now, before God I entreat you most earnestly to be reconciled to him, you are by nature at enmity with God; you hate him, you neglect him, your enmity shows itself in various ways. I beseech you now be reconciled to God. I might entreat you to be reconciled, because it would be a fearful thing to die with God for your enemy. Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who can abide with the eternal burnings? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. Beware, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. I beseech you therefore, be reconciled to God. I might on the other hand, use another argument, and remind you that those who are reconciled to God, are thereby proved to be the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. There are crowns for God's friends; there are harps for them that love him; there is prepared a mansion for every one that seeketh unto him. Therefore, if thou wouldst be blessed throughout eternity, be reconciled to God. But I shall not urge that; I shall urge the reason of my text. I beseech thee, my hearer, be reconciled to God, because if thou repentest, it is proof that Christ has stood in thy stead. Oh, if this argument do not melt thee, there is none in heaven or earth that can. If thy heart melteth not at such an argument as this, then it is harder than the nether millstone, sure thou hast a soul of stone, and a heart of brass, if thou wilt not be reconciled to God who hath written this for thine encouragement.

I beseech thee be reconciled to God, because in this there is proof that God is loving you. Thou thinkest God to be a God of wrath. Would he have given his own Son to be punished if he had hated thee? Sinner if God had anything but thoughts of love towards thee, I ask, would he have given up his Son to hang upon the cross? Think not my God a tyrant; think him not a wrathful God, destitute of mercy. His Son, torn from his bosom and given up to die, is the best proof of his love. Oh, sinner, I need not blame thee if thou didst hate thy enemy, but I must blame thee, call thee mad, if thou dost hate thy friend. Oh, I need not wonder if thou wouldst not be reconciled to one who would not be reconciled to thee;

but, inasmuch as thou wilt not by nature be reconciled to the God who gave his own Son to die, I must marvel at the stupidity into which thine evil nature hath hurried thee. God is love; wilt thou be unreconciled to love? God is grace; wilt thou be unreconciled to grace. Oh, rebel that thou art of deepest dye if still thou art unreconciled. Remember, too, oh, soul, that the way is open for thy reconciliation, Thou needest not be punished; yea, thou shalt not be. If thou knowest thyself to be a sinner, by the Spirit's teaching, God will not punish thee to maintain His justice: that justice is sufficiently maintained by the punishment of Christ. He saith, "be reconciled." The child runneth away from his father when he hath sinned, because he fears his father will punish him; but when his father burns the rod, and with a smiling face says, "child, come hither," sure it must be an unloving child that would not run into such a father's arms. Sinner thou deservest the sword; God has snapped the sword across the knee of Christ's atonement, and now he says "Come to me." You deserve infinite, eternal wrath, and the displeasure of God; God has quenched that wrath for all believers, and now he says, "Come to me and be reconciled." Do you tell me that you are not sinners? I was not preaching to you. Do you tell me that you have never rebelled against God? I warn you that though *you* cannot find your own sins out, *God* will find them out. Do you say, "I need no reconciliation, except that which I can make myself?" Be warned that if thou rejectest Christ, thou rejectest thine only hope; for all that thou canst do is less than nothing and vanity. I was not preaching to thee, when I said, "Be reconciled." I was preaching to thee, poor afflicted conscience; I was preaching to thee—thou that hast been a great sinner and transgressor, thou that feelest thy guilt; to thee, thou adulterer, trembling now under the lash of conviction; to thee; thou blasphemer, quivering now from head to foot; I preach to thee thou thief, whose eye is now filled with the tear of penitence; thou feelest that hell must be thy portion, unless thou art saved through Christ; I preach to thee, thou that knowest thy guilt; I preach to thee and to every one such, and I beseech thee to be reconciled to God, for God is reconciled to thee. Oh, let not your heart stand out against this.

I cannot plead as I could wish. Oh! if I could I would plead with my heart, with my eyes, and my lips, that I might lead you to the Saviour. You need not rail at me and call this an Arminian style of preaching; I care not for your opinion, this style is Scriptural. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Poor broken-hearted sinner, God is as much preaching to you this morning, and bidding you be reconciled, as if he stood here himself in his own person; and though I be a mean and puny man by whom he speaketh, he speaketh now as much as if it were by the voice of angels, "Be reconciled to God." Come, friend, turn not thine eye and head away from me; but give me thine hand and lend me thine heart whilst I weep over thine hand and cry over thine heart, and beseech thee not to despise thine own mercy, not to be a suicide to thine own soul, not to damn thyself. Now that God has awakened thee to feel that thou art an enemy,

I beseech thee now to be his friend. Remember, if thou art now convinced of sin, there is no punishment for thee. He was punished in thy stead. Wilt thou believe this? Wilt thou trust in it, and so be at peace with God? If thou sayest, "No!" then I would have thee know that thou hast put away thine own mercy. If thou sayest, "I need no reconciliation," thou hast thrust away the only hope thou canst ever have. Do it at thine own hazard; I wash my hands of thy blood. But, but, but, if thou knowest thyself to need a Saviour if thou wouldst escape the hellish pit, if thou wouldst walk among them that are sanctified, I again, in the name of him that will condemn thee at the last day, if thou rejectest this invitation, implore and beseech thee to be reconciled to God. I am his ambassador. When I have done this sermon, I shall go back to court. Sinner, what shall I say of thee. Shall I go back and tell my Master that thou intendest to be his enemy for ever? Shall I go back and tell him, "They heard me, but they regarded not?" they said in their hearts, "we will go away to our sins and our follies, and we will not serve your God, neither fear him!" Shall I tell him such a message as that? Must I be driven to go back to his palace with such a fearful story? I beseech thee, send me not back so, lest my Master's wrath wax hot, and he say,

"They that despised my promised rest,
Shall have no portion there"

But oh! may I not go back to court to-day, and tell the Monarch on my knees, "There be some my Lord, that have been great rebels, but when they saw themselves rebels, they threw themselves at the foot of the cross, and asked for pardon. They had strangely revolted, but I heard them say, 'If he will forgive me I will turn from my evil ways, if he will enable me!' They were gross transgressors, and they confessed it; but I heard them say, 'Jesus, thy blood and righteousness are my only trust.'" Happy ambassador, I will go back to my Master with a gladsome countenance, and tell him that peace is made between many a soul and the great God. But miserable ambassador who has to go back and say, "There is no peace made." How shall it be? The Lord decide it! May many hearts give way to Omnipotent grace now, and may enemies of grace be changed into friends, that God's elect may be gathered in, and his eternal purpose accomplished.

III. And now, I close up by noticing the SWEET ENJOYMENT which this doctrine brings to a believer. Mourning Christian! dry up your tears. Are you weeping on account of sin? Why weepest thou? Weep because of thy sin, but weep not through any fear of punishment. Has the evil one told thee that thou shalt be condemned? Tell him to his face that he lies. Ah! poor distressed believer; art thou mourning over thine own corruptions? Look to thy perfect Lord, and remember, thou art complete in him, thou art in God's sight as perfect as if thou hadst never sinned; nay, more than that, the Lord our righteousness hath put a divine garment upon thee, so that thou hast more than the righteousness of man—thou hast the righteousness of God. Oh! thou that art mourning by reason of in-bred sin and depravity, remember, none of thy sins can condemn thee. Thou hast learned to hate sin; but

thou hast learned to know that sin is not thine—it is put on Christ’s head. Come, be of good cheer: thy standing is not in thyself—it is in Christ; thine acceptance is not in thyself, but in thy Lord; with all thy sin, thou art as much accepted to-day as in thy sanctification; thou art as much accepted of God to-day, with all thine iniquities, as thou wilt be when thou standest before his throne, rendered free from all corruption. Oh! I beseech thee, lay hold on this precious thought, perfection in Christ! For thou art perfect in Christ Jesus. With thy Saviour’s garment on, thou art holy as the holy ones; thou art now justified by faith; thou hast now peace with God. Be of good cheer; do not fear to die; death has nothing terrible in it to thee; Christ hath extracted all the gall from the sting of death. Tremble not at judgment; judgment will not bring thee another acquital, to add to the acquital already given in thy cause.

Bold shalt thou stand at that great day,
For who aught to thy charge can lay
Fully absolved by Christ thou art,
From sin’s tremendous guilt and smart.

Ah, when thou comest to die, thou shalt challenge God; for thou shalt say, “My God, thou canst not condemn me, for thou hast condemned Christ for me, thou hast punished Christ in my stead. ‘Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who also sitteth on the right hand of God and maketh intercession for us:’” Christian, be glad; let thy head lack no oil, and thy face no ointment; “go thy way; eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath accepted thy works.” Do as Solomon bids us do; live happily all the days of thy life; for thou art accepted in the beloved—thou art pardoned through the blood, and justified through the righteousness of Christ. What hast thou to fear? Let thy face ever wear a smile; let thine eyes sparkle with gladness; live near thy Master; live in the suburbs of the celestial city, as by-and-by when thy time has come thou shalt borrow better wings than angels ever wore, and out soar the cherubim, and rise up where thy Jesus sits—sit at his right hand, even as he has overcome and has sat down upon his Father’s right hand; and all this because the divine Lord, “was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

A Preacher from the Dead

A Sermon

(No. 143)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 26, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.—[Luke 16:31](#).”

MAN is very loath to think ill of himself. The most of mankind are very prone to indulge in apologies for sin. They say, “If we had lived in better times we had been better men; if we had been born into this world under happier auspices we should have been holier; and if we had been placed in more excellent circumstances we should have been more inclined to the right.” The mass of men, when they seek the cause of their sin, seek it anywhere but in the right place. They will not blame their own nature for it; they will not find fault with their own corrupt heart, but they will lay the blame anywhere else. Some of them find fault with their peculiar position. “If,” says one, “I had been born rich, instead of being poor, I should not have been dishonest.” “Or if,” says another, “I had been born in middle life, instead of being rich, I should not have been exposed to such temptations to lust and pride as I am now; but my very condition is so adverse to piety, that I am compelled by the place I hold in society, to be anything but what I ought to be.” Others turn round and find fault with the whole of society; they say that the whole organism of society is wrong; they tell us that everything in government, everything that concerns the state, everything which melts men into commonwealths, is all so bad that they cannot be good while things are what they are. They must have a revolution, they must upset everything; and then they think they could be holy! Many on the other hand throw the blame on their training. If they had not been so brought up by their parents, if they had not been so exposed in their youth, they would not have been what they are. It is their parent’s fault; the sin lay at their father’s or their mother’s door. Or it is their constitution. Hear them speak for themselves, “If I had such a temper as so-and-so, what a good man I would be! But with my headstrong disposition it is impossible. It is all very well for you to talk to me but men have different turns of mind, and my turn of mind is such that I could not by any means be a serious character;” and so he throws the blame on his constitution. Others go a deal farther, and throw the blame on the ministry. “If,” say they, “at one time the minister had been more earnest in preaching, I should have been a better man; if it had been my privilege to sit under sounder doctrine and hear the Word more faithfully preached, I should have been better.” Or else they lay it at the door of professors of religion, and say, “If the church were more consistent, if there were no hypocrites and no formalists: then we should reform!” Ah! sirs, you are putting the saddle on

the wrong horse, you are laying the burden on the wrong back; the blame is in your hearts, nowhere else. If your hearts were renewed you would be better; but until that is done, if society were remodelled to perfection, if ministers were angels, and professors of religion were seraphs, you would be none the better; but having less excuse for your sin, you would be doubly guilty, and perish with a more terrible destruction. But yet men will always be having it, that if things were different they would be different too, whereas, the difference must be made in themselves, if they begin in the right place.

Amongst other whims which have occurred to the human mind, such an one as that of my text may sometimes have arisen. "If," said the rich man in hell, "if one should arise from the dead, if Lazarus should go from heaven to preach, my hardened brethren would repent." And some have been apt to say, "If my aged father, or some venerable patriarch could rise from the dead and preach, we should all of us turn to God." That is another way of casting the blame in the wrong quarter: we shall endeavor, if we can, to refute such a supposition as that this morning, and affirm most strenuously the doctrine of the text, that "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Let us proceed with this subject.

Suppose a preacher should come from another world to preach to us, we must naturally suppose that he came from heaven. Even the rich man did not ask that he or any of his compeers in torment might go out of hell to preach. Spirits that are lost and given up to unutterable wickedness, could not visit this earth; and if they did they could not preach the truth, nor lead us on the road to heaven which they had not trodden themselves. The advent of a damned spirit upon earth would be a curse, a blight, a withering blast, we need not suppose that such a thing ever did or could occur. The preacher from another world, if such could come, must come from heaven. He must be a Lazarus who had lain in Abraham's bosom, a pure, perfect, and holy being. Now, imagine for a moment that such an one had descended upon earth; suppose that we heard to-morrow a sudden piece of news—that a venerable spirit, who had been a long time buried, had on a sudden burst his cerements, lifted up his coffin-lid, and was now preaching the word of life. Oh! what a rush there would be to hear him preach! What place in this wide world would be large enough to hold his massive congregations! How would you rush to listen to him! How many thousands of portraits would be published of him, representing him in the dread winding-sheet of death, or as an angel fresh from heaven. Oh! how would this city be stirred: and not this city only, but this whole land! Nations far remote would soon hear the news; and every ship would be freighted with passengers, bringing men and women to hear this wondrous preacher and traveler who had returned from the bourne unknown. And how would you listen? And how solemnly would you gaze at that unearthly spectre! And how would your ears be attent to his every word! His faintest syllable would be caught and published everywhere throughout the world—the utterances of a man who had been dead and was alive again. And we are

very apt to suppose, that if such a thing should happen, there would be numberless conversions, for surely the congregations thus attracted would be immensely blest. Many hardened sinners would be led to repent; hundreds of halts would be made to decide, and great good would be done. Ah! stop, though the first part of the fairy dream should occur, yet would not the last. If some one should rise from the dead, yet would sinners no more repent through his preaching than through the preaching of any other. God might bless such preaching to salvation, if he pleased; but in itself there would be no more power in the preaching of the sheeted dead, or of the glorified spirit, than there is in the preaching of feeble man to-day. "Though one should rise from the dead, they would not repent."

But yet, many men would suppose that advantages would arise from the resurrection of a saint, who could testify to what he had seen and heard. Now, the advantages, I suppose, could only be three. Some would say there would be advantage *in the strength of evidence which such a man could give to the truth of Scripture*; for you would say, "If a man did actually come from the pearly-gated city of Jerusalem, the home of the blest, then there would be no more dispute about the truth of revelation. That would be settled." Some would suppose that he could tell us more than Moses and the prophets had told us, and that there would be *an advantage in the instruction which he could confer*, as well as in the evidence which he would bear. And, thirdly, there may be some who suppose that it would be an advantage gained *in the manner in which such an one would speak*, "For surely," say they, "he would speak with great eloquence, with a far mightier power, and with a deeper feeling than any common preacher who had never beheld the solemnities of another world." Now, these three points one after another, and we think we will settle them.

I. First, it is thought that if one did come from the dead to preach, there would be A CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, and a testimony borne at which jeering infidelity would stand aghast in silence. Stop, we will see about that. We do not think so. We believe that the resurrection of one dead man to-day, to come into this hall and preach, would be no confirmation of the gospel to any person here present who does not believe it already.

If, my friends, the testimony of one man who had been raised from the dead were of any value for the confirming of the gospel; *would not God have used it before now?* This shall be my first argument. It is undoubtedly true that some have risen from the dead. We find accounts in Holy Scripture of some men who by the power of Christ Jesus, or through the instrumentality of prophets, were raised from the dead; but ye will note this memorable fact, that they never any of them spoke one word which is recorded, by way of telling us what they saw while they were dead. I shall not enter into any discussion as to whether their souls slept during the time of their death, or whether they were in heaven or not. That would be a discussion without profit, only gendering disputes, which could yield no fruit. I only say, it is memorable that there is not a record of any one of them having given any description

of what they saw while they were dead. Oh, what secrets might he have told out, who had laid in his grave four days! Do ye not suppose that his sisters questioned him? Do ye not think that they asked him what he saw—whether he had stood before the burning throne of God, and been judged for the things done in his body, and whether he had entered into rest? But, however they may have asked, it is certain he gave no answer, for had he given an answer we should have known it now; tradition would have cherished the record. And do ye remember, when Paul once preached a long sermon, even until midnight, there was a young man in the third loft named Eutychus, who fell asleep, and fell down, and was taken up dead? Paul came down and prayed, and Eutychus was restored to life. But did Eutychus get up and preach after he had come from the dead? No; the thought never seems to have struck a single person in the assembly. Paul went on with his sermon, and they sat and listened to him, and did not care one fig about what Eutychus had seen; for Eutychus had nothing more to tell them than Paul had. Of all the number of those who by divine might have been brought again from the shades of death, I repeat the assertion, we have not one secret told; we have not one mystery unravelled by them all. Now, God knoweth best; we will not compare our surmises to divine decision. If God decided that resurrection men should be silent, it was best it should be; their testimony would have been of little worth or help to us, or else it would have been borne.

But again, I think it will strike our minds at once, that if this very day a man should rise from his tomb, and come here to affirm the truth of the gospel, *the infidel world would be no more near believing than it is now*. Here comes Mr. Infidel Critic. He denies the evidences of the Bible; evidences which so clearly prove its authenticity, that we are obliged to believe him to be either blasphemous or senseless, in that he does so, and we leave him his choice between the two. But he dares to deny the truth of Holy Scripture, and will have it that all the miracles whereby it is attested are untrue and false. Do you think that one who had risen from the dead would persuade such a man as that to believe? What? when God's whole creation having been ransacked by the hand of science, has only testified to the truth of revelation—when the whole history of buried cities and departed nations has but preached out the truth that the Bible was true—when every strip of land in the far-off East has been an exposition and a confirmation of the prophecies of Scripture; if men are yet unconvinced, do ye suppose that one dead man rising from the tomb would convince them? No; I see the critical blasphemer already armed for his prey. Hark to him; "I am not quite sure that you ever were dead, sir, you profess to be risen from the dead; I do not believe you. You say you have been dead, and have gone to heaven; my dear man you were in a trance. You must bring proof from the parish register that you were dead." The proof is brought that he was dead. "Well, now you must prove that you were buried." It is proved that he was buried, and it is proved that some sexton in old times, did take up his dry bones and cast his dust in the air." That is very good now I walls you to prove that you are the identical man that

was buried.” “Well I am, I know I am; I tell you as an honest man I have been to heaven, and I have come back again.” “Well then,” says the infidel, “it is not consistent with reason; it is ridiculous to suppose that a man who was dead and buried could ever come to life again, and so I don’t believe you, I tell you so straight to your face.” That is how men would answer him; and instead of having only the sin of denying many miracles men would have to add to it the guilt of denying another but they would not be so much as a tithe of an inch nearer to conviction; and certainly, if the wonder were done in some far-off land, and only reported to the rest of the world, I can suppose that the whole infidel world would exclaim, “Simple childish tales and such traditions have been current elsewhere; but we are sensible men, we do not believe them.” Although a churchyard should start into life, and stand up before the infidel who denies the truth of Christianity; I declare I do not believe there would be enough evidence in all the churchyards in the world to convince him. Infidelity would still cry for something more. It is like the horse-leech; it crieth, “Give, give!” Prove a point to an infidel, and he wants it proved again; let it be as clear as noon day to him from the testimony of many witnesses, yet doth he not believe it. In fact, he doth believe it; but he pretendeth not to do so, and is an infidel in spite of himself. But certainly the dead man’s rising would be little worth for the conviction of such men.

But remember, my dear friends, that the most numerous class of unbelievers are a set of people who never think at all. There are a great number of people in this land that eat and drink, and everything else except think at least, they think enough to take their shop shutters down of a morning, and put them up at night; they think enough to know a little about the rising of the funds, or the rate per cent. of interest, or something like how articles are selling or the price of bread; but their brains seem to be given them for nothing at all, except to meditate upon bread and cheese. To them religion is a matter of very small concern. They dare say the Bible is very true, they dare say religion is all right; but it does not often trouble them much. They suppose they are Christians; for were they not christened when they were babies? They must be Christians—at least they suppose so, but they never sit down to enquire what religion is. They sometimes go to church and chapel and elsewhere; but it does not signify much to them. One minister may contradict another, but they do not know; they dare say they are both right. One minister may fall foul of another in almost every doctrine; it does not signify, and they pass over religion with the queer idea—“God Almighty will not ask us where we went to, I dare say.” They do not exercise their judgments at all. Thinking is such hard work for them that they never trouble themselves at all about it. Now, if a man were to rise from the dead to-morrow these people would never be startled. Yes; yes, they would go and see him once, just as they go and see any other curiosity, the living skeleton, or Tom Thumb; they would talk about him a good deal, and say, “There’s a man risen from the dead,” and possibly some winter’s evening they might read one of his sermons; but they would never give themselves trouble to think whether his testimony was worth

anything or not. No, they are such blocks they never could be stirred; and if the ghost were to come to any of their houses the most they would feel would be, they were in a fearful fright; but as to what he said, that would never exercise their leaden brains, and never stir their stony senses. Though one should rise from the dead, the great mass of these people never would be affected.

And, besides my friends, *if men will not believe the witness of God, it is impossible that they should believe the witness of man.* If the voice of God from the top of Sinai and his voice by Moses in the book of the Law, if his voice by the divers prophets in the Old Testament, and especially his own word by his own Son, who hath brought immortality to light by the gospel, cannot convince men, then there is nothing in the world that can of itself accomplish the work. No, if God speak once, but man regardeth him not, we need not wonder that we have to preach many a time without being regarded; and we should not harbour the thought that some men who had risen from the dead would have a greater power to convince than the words of God. If this Bible be not enough to convert you, apart from the Spirit? (and certainly it is not) then there is nothing in the world that can, apart from his influence; and if the revelation which God has given of his Son Jesus Christ in this blessed book, If the Holy Scripture be not in the hands of God enough to bring you to the faith of Christ, then, though an angel from heaven, then, though the saints from glory, then, though God himself should descend on earth to preach to you, you would go on unwed and unblest. “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” That is the first point.

II. It is imagined, however, that if one of “the spirits of the just made perfect” would come to earth, even if he did not produce a most satisfactory testimony to the minds of sceptics, he would yet be able to give abundant information concerning the kingdom of heaven. “Surely,” some would say, “if Lazarus had come from the bosom of Abraham, he could have unfolded a tale that would have made our hair stand upright, while he talked of the torments of the rich man; surely, if he had looked from the gates of bliss, he might have told us about the worm that dieth not and the fire that never can be quenched: some horrible details, some thrilling words of horror and of terror he might have uttered, which would have unfolded to us more of the future state of the lost than we know now.” “And,” says the bright-eyed believer, “if he had come on earth he might have told us of the saints’ everlasting rest: he might have pictured to us that glorious city which hath the Lord God for its eternal light, the streets whereof are of gold, and its gates of pearl. Oh! how sweetly would he have descanted upon the bosom of Christ, and the felicity of the blest. He had been

’Up where eternal ages roll;
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits immortal feast the soul.’

Surely he would have brought down with him some handfuls of the clusters of Eshcol; he would have been able to tell us some celestial secrets, which would have cheered our hearts, and nerved us to run the heavenly race, and put a cheerful courage on." Stop, that is a dream too. A spirit of the just descending from heaven could tell us no more that would be of any use to us than we know already. What more could that spirit from heaven tell us of the pains of hell than we do already know? Is not the Bible explicit enough? Did not the lips of Christ dreadfully portray the lake of fire? Did he not, even he who went over men, did he not in awful language tell us that God would say at last, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" Do you need more thrilling words than these? "The worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." Do you need more terrible warnings than these,— "The wicked shall be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God?" Do you want more awful warnings than this— "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" What! do you want a fuller declaration than the words of God. "Tophet is prepared of old; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it?" You cannot want more than Scripture gives of that. Even that you try to run away and escape from; you say the book is too horrible, and tells you too much of damnation and hell. Sirs, if you think there is too much there, and therefore reject it, would you stand for an instant to listen to one who should tell you more? No; ye do not wish to know more, nor would it be of any use to you if you did. Do you need more details concerning the judgment, that day of wrath to which each of us is drawing nigh? Are we not told that the king "shall sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all people; and he shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats." Suppose there were one here who had seen the solemn preparation for the great assize—one who had stood where the throne is to be planted, and had marked the future with a more piercing eye than ours. Yet of what avail would it be to us? Could he tell us more than Holy Writ hath told us now—at least, any which would be more profitable? Perhaps he knows no more than we. And one thing I am sure of, he would not tell us more about the rule of judgment than we know now. Spirit that hath returned from another world, tell me, how are men judged? Why are they condemned? Why are they saved? I hear him say, "Men are condemned because of sin. Read the ten commandments of Moses, and you will find the ten great condemnations whereby men are for ever cut off." I knew that before, bright Spirit; thou hast told me nothing! "No," says he, "and nothing can I tell." "Because I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was sick, and ye visited me not; I was in prison, and ye came not unto me; therefore, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me. Depart, ye cursed!" "Why, Spirit, was that the word of the King?" "It was," says he, "I have read that, too, thou hast told me no more." If you do not know the difference between right and wrong from reading the Scripture, you would not know it if a spirit should tell

you; if you do not know the road to hell and the road to heaven from the Bible itself, you would never know it at all. No book could be more clear, no revelation more distinct, no testimony more plain. And since without the agency of the Spirit, these testimonies are insufficient for salvation, it follows that no further declaration would avail. Salvation is ascribed wholly to God, and man's ruin only to man. What more could a spirit tell us, than—a distinct declaration of the two great truths.—“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help found!”

Beloved, we do solemnly say again, that Holy Scripture is so perfect, so complete, that it cannot want the supplement of any declaration concerning a future state. All that you ought to know concerning the future you may know from Holy Scripture. It is not right to say with Young—

“My hopes and fears start up alarmed,
And o'er life's narrow verge look down,
On what? A bottomless abyss,
A dread eternity.”

It is not right to say that, as if it were all we know. Blessed be God, the saint does not look down upon a bottomless abyss; he looks up to the celestial “city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Nor do even the wicked look down upon an unknown abyss; for to them it is clearly revealed. Though “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,” the tortures of the lost yet hath Holy Scripture sufficiently told us of them to make it a well-mapped road; so that when they meet with death, and hell, and terror, it shall be no new thing; for they heard of it before, and it was distinctly revealed to them. Nothing more could we know that would be of any use. Tattlers, idle curiosity people, and such like, would be mightily delighted with such a man. Ah! what a precious preacher he would be to them, if they could get him all the way from heaven, and get him to tell all its secrets out! Oh! how would they love him—how would they delight in him! “For,” say they “he knows a great deal more than anybody else; he knows a great deal more than the Bible tells us; he knows a great many little details, and it is wonderful to hear him explain them!” But there the matter would end. It would be merely the gratification of curiosity; there would be no conferring of blessing; for if to know more of the future state would be a blessing for us, God would not withhold it; there can be no more told us.—If what you know would not persuade you, “Neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

III. Yet some say, SURELY, IF THERE WERE NO GAIN IN MATTER, YET THERE WOULD BE A GAIN IN MANNER. Oh, if such a spirit had descended from the spheres, how would he preach! What eloquence celestial would flow from his lips! How majestically would he word his speech! How mightily would he move his hearers! What marvellous words would he utter! What sentences that might start us from our feet, and make us quiver with their thrilling influence. There would be no dulness in such a preacher; it would be no

fatigue to hear him; there would be no want of affection in him, and surely no want of earnestness; we might well be pleased to hear him every day, and never weary with his wondrous speech. Such a preacher earth hath never heard. Oh, if he would but come! How would we listen!”—Stay! that too is a dream. I do believe that Lazarus from Abraham’s bosom would not be so good a preacher as a man who has not died, but whose lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar. Instead of his being better, I cannot see that he would be quite so good. Could a spirit from the other world speak to you more solemnly than Moses and the prophets have spoken? Or could they speak more solemnly than you have heard the word spoken to you at divers times already? O sirs, some of you have heard sermons that have been as solemn as death and as serious as the grave. I can recall to some of your memories seasons when you have sat beneath the sound of the word, wondering and trembling all the while. It seemed as if the minister had taken to himself bow and arrows, and were making your conscience the butt at which his shafts were levelled. You have not known where you were, you have been so grievously frightened and smitten with terror that your knees did knock together, and your eyes ran with tears. What more do you want than that? If that solemn preaching of some mighty preacher whom God had inspired for the time—if that did not save you, what can save you, apart from the influence of the Spirit? And oh! you have heard more solemn preaching than that. You had a little daughter once; that child of yours had been to the Sabbath-school; it came home, and was sick unto death you watched it by night and day, and the fever grew upon it; and you saw that it must die. You have not forgotten yet how your little daughter Mary preached you a sermon that was solemn indeed: just before she departed she took your hand in her little hand, and she said, “Father, I am going to heaven; will you follow me?” That was a solemn sermon to you. What more could sheeted dead have said? Ye have not forgotten yet, how when your father lay a dying—(a holy man of God he had been in his day, and served his Master well)—you with your brothers and sisters stood around the bed, and he addressed you one by one. Woman! you have not forgotten yet, despite all your sin and wickedness since then, how he looked you in the face and said, “My daughter, ‘twere better for thee that thou hadst never been born than that thou shouldst be a despiser of Christ and a neglecter of his salvation.” And you have not forgotten how he looked when with solemn tears in his eyes he addressed you and said, “My children, I charge you by death and by eternity, I charge you, if you love your own souls, despise not the gospel of Christ; forsake your follies, and turn unto God and live.” What preacher do you want better than that? What voice more solemn than the voice of that of your own parent upon the confines of eternity? And you have not yet quite clean escaped from the influence of another solemn scene. You had a friend, a so-called friend; he was a traitor, one who lived in sin and rebelled against God with a high hand and an outstretched arm. You remember his death-bed, when he lay near to death terrors got hold of him; the flames of hell began to get their grip of him, before he had clean departed. You

have not yet forgotten his shrieks, his screams, you have not yet quite got from your vision in your dreams that hand through which the finger nails were almost pierced in agony, and that face, contorted with direful twitchings of dismay. You have not clear escaped yet from that horrid yell with which the spirit entered the realm of darkness and forsook the land of the living. What more of a preacher do you want? Have you heard this preaching, and yet have you not repented? Then verily, if after all this you are hardened, neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Ah! but you say, you want some one to preach to you more feelingly. Then, Sir, you cannot have him in the preacher you desire. A spirit from heaven could not be a feeling preacher.—It would be impossible for Lazarus, who had been in Abraham's bosom, to preach to you with emotion. As a perfect being of course he must be supremely happy. Imagine this morning a supremely happy being preaching to you, about repentance and the wrath of God. Do you not see him? there is a placid smile ever upon his brow; the light of heaven gilds his face, he is talking about the torments of hell, it was the place for sighs and groans; but he cannot sigh, his face is just as placid as ever. He is speaking of the torments of the wicked, it was the time for tears; he cannot weep; that were incompatible with blessedness. The man is preaching of dreadful things with a smile upon his face; there is summer on his brow, and winter on his lips—heaven in his eyes, and hell in his mouth. You could not bear such a preacher; he would seem to mock you. Ay, it needs a man to preach a man like yourselves, who is capable of feeling. There wants one who, when he preaches of Christ, smiles on his hearers with love—who, when he tells of terror, quails in his own spirit whilst he utters the wrath of God. The great power of preaching, next to the power of God's Spirit, lies in the preacher's feeling it. We shall never do much good in preaching unless we feel what we utter. "*Knowing* the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." Now a glorified spirit from heaven could not feel these things; he could show but little emotion. True, he could speak of the glories of heaven; and how would his face grow brighter, and brighter, and brighter, as he told the wonders of that upper world! But when he came to cry "Flee from the wrath to come," the voice would sound as sweet when he spoke of death and judgment, as when he spoke of glory; and that would make sad discord, the sound not answering to the sense—the modulations of his voice being unfit to express the idea upon the mind. Such a preacher could not be a powerful preacher, even though he came again from the dead.

And one thing we may say, he could not preach more closely home to you than you have had the truth preached to you. I shall not say that you have had preaching put very close to you from the pulpit. I have striven to be very personal sometimes: I have not shunned to point some of you out in the congregation, and given you a word of rebuke, such as you could not mistake nor if I knew that any of you were indulging in sin would I spare you. I bless God that I am not afraid to be a personal preacher, and to shoot the arrow at each separate man when he needs it. But, nevertheless, I cannot preach home to you as I would.

Ye are all thinking your neighbor is intended, when it is yourself. But you have had a personal preacher once. There was a great preacher called at your house one day; his name was Cholera and Death. A terrible preacher he! With grim words and hard accent he came and laid his hand upon your wife; and then he put his other hand on you, and you grew cold and well-nigh stiff: You remember how he preached to you then. He made your conscience ring again and again; he would not let you lie still; he cried aloud concerning your sin and your iniquity; he brought all your past life to light, and set all your evil conduct in review. From your childhood even up till then he led you through all your wanderings: and then he took the whip of the law, and began to plough your back with furrows. He affrighted you with “the wrath to come.” You sent for the minister; you bade him pray; you thought you prayed yourself; and after all that, that preacher went away, and he had come on a fruitless errand; no good had been done to you; you had been a little startled and a little stirred, but you are to-day what you were then, unsaved and unconverted. Then, sir, you would not be converted, though one rose from the dead. You have been wrecked at sea; you have been cast into the jaws of the grave by fever; you have been nearly smitten to death by accident; and yet, with all this personal preaching, and with Mr. Conscience thundering in your ears, you are to-day unconverted. Then learn this truth, that no outward means in the world can ever bring you to the footstool of divine grace and make you a Christian, if Moses and the prophets have failed. All that can be done now is this: God the Spirit must bless the word to you otherwise conscience cannot awaken you, reason cannot awaken you, powerful appeals cannot awaken you persuasion cannot bring you to Christ. Nothing will ever do it except God the Holy Spirit. Oh! do you feel that you are drawn this morning? Does some sweet hand draw you to Christ, and does some blessed voice say, “Come to Jesus, sinner; there is hope for thee.” Then that IS God’s Spirit. Bless him for it! He is drawing thee by the bands of love and the cords of a man. But oh, if thou be undrawn and left to thyself, thou wilt surely die. Brethren and sisters in the faith, let us lift up our prayers to God for sinners, that they may be drawn to Christ—that they may be led to come, all guilty and burdened, and look to Jesus to be lightened, and that they may be persuaded, by the coming power of the Spirit, to take Christ to be their “all-in-all,” knowing that they themselves are ‘nothing at all.’ O God the Holy Spirit bless these words, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen and Amen.

Waiting Only Upon God

A Sermon

(No. 144)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 2, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“My soul, wait thou only upon God.”—[Psalm 62:6](#).

CALVIN translates this verse, “My soul, be thou silent before God.” Rest calm and undisturbed. Thine enemies are round about thee, and have sore beset thee thy troubles do surround thee like strong bulls of Bashan; but rest, my soul, in God. Thine enemies are mighty, but HE IS Almighty; thy troubles are grievous, but he is greater than thy troubles, and he shall deliver thee from them. Let not thy soul be agitated. The *wicked* are like the troubled sea that cannot rest: be not thou like unto them. Be thou calm: let not a wave ruffle thine untroubled spirit. “Cast thy burden on the Lord,” and then sleep on his bosom. Commit thy way unto Jehovah, and then rest in sure and certain confidence, for

“He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.”

Oh! that we had grace to carry out the text in that sense of it! It is a hard matter to be calm in the day of trouble; but it is a high exercise of divine grace when we can stand unmoved in the day of adversity, and feel that

“Should the earth’s old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our stedfast souls should hear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”

That is to be a Christian indeed. Nothing is so sweet as to

“Lie passive in God’s hand,
And know no will but his.”

I shall, however, this morning stand to the authorised version. “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.” Here is, first, *an exhortation*, and secondly, an *expectation*.

I. We begin with the EXHORTATION. The Psalmist was a *preacher*, and it was quite right that he should sometimes make himself his congregation. The preacher who neglects to preach to himself has forgotten a very important part of his audience. He who never in his silent privacy speaketh a word to his own soul, doth not know where to begin his

preaching. We must first address our own soul. If we can move *that* by the words we may utter, we may hope to have some power with the souls of others.

And note where David begins his exhortation: “*My soul, wait thou upon God.*” He addresses the very center of his being. “My soul, I preach to thee; for if thou goest wrong, all is amiss. If thou art amiss, mine eyes follow after vanity, my lips utter leasing, my feet become swift to shed blood, and mine hands meddle with mischief. My soul, I will preach to thee. My face, I will not preach to thee. Some men preach to their faces, and try to put on their countenances emotions which they never feel. No, countenance, I will leave thee alone: thou wilt be right enough if the soul is so. I will preach to thee, O my soul, and address my sermon to thee Thou art mine only auditor: hear what I say.” “*My soul, wait thou only upon God.*” Let us, then, explain the exhortation.

1. First, the Psalmist means by this,—*My soul make God thine only object in life.* “My soul, wait thou only upon God.” Make him the summit of thy desires and the object of thine exertions. Oh! how many men have made a fearful shipwreck of their entire existence, by choosing an object inferior to this high and noble object of existence, the serving of God. I could put my finger upon a thousand biographies of men, who after having lived in this world and done great things, have nevertheless died unhappily, because they did not first seek God and his righteousness. Perhaps there never was a mind more gigantic than the mind of Sir Walter Scott: a man whose soul was as fertile as the newly broken soil of the land of gold. That man was a good man I believe, a Christian; but he made a mistake in the object of his life. His object was to be a laird, to found a family, to plant the root of an ancestral tree the fruit of which should be heard of in ages to come; magnificent in his hospitality, generous in his nature, laborious in his continual strife to win the object of his life, yet after all he died a disappointed and unsuccessful man. He reared his palace, he accumulated his wealth and one sad day saw it scattered to the wind, and he had lost that for which he had lived. Had he fixed his eye upon some better object than the pleasing of the public, or the accumulation of wealth, or the founding of a family, he might have got the others, and he would not have lost the first. Oh! had he said “Now I will serve my God; this potent pen of mine, dedicated to the Most High; shall weave into my marvellous stories things that shall enlighten, convince, and lead to Jesus,” he might have died penniless, but he would have died having achieved the object of his wishes—not a disappointed man. Oh if we could make God our only object we should rest quite secure, and whatever happened it never could be said of us, “He died without having had what he wished for.” How many of you that are here to day are making the same mistake on a smaller scale? You are living for business. You will be disappointed, then. You are living for fame. As certain as you are alive you will die disappointed, grieved and sad at heart. You are living to maintain respectability; perhaps that is the utmost of your desire. Poor aim that! You shall be disappointed; or even if you gain it, it shall be a bubble not worth the chase. Make God your one object in life, and all

these things shall be added to you, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” There is no loss in being a Christian, and making God the first object; but make anything else your goal, and with all your running, should you run ever so well, you shall fall short of the mark; or if you gain it, you shall fall uncrowned, unhonored to the earth. “My soul, wait thou only upon God.” Say, “I love to serve him; I love to spread his kingdom, to advance his interests, to tell the story of his gospel, to increase the number of his converted ones that shall be my only object; and when that is sufficiently attained, ‘Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.’”

2. But the Psalmist meant other things beside this, when he said, “My soul wait thou only upon God.” He meant, *My soul, have no care but to please God*. Perhaps the most miserable people in the world are the very careful ones. You that are so anxious about what shall happen on the morrow that you cannot enjoy the pleasures of to-day, you who have such a peculiar cast of mind that you suspect every star to be a comet, and imagine that there must be a volcano in every grassy mead, you that are more attracted by the spots in the sun than by the sun himself, and more amazed by one sear leaf upon the tree than by all the verdure of the woods—you that make more of your troubles than you could do of your joys,—I say, I think you belong to the most miserable of men. David says to his soul, “My soul, be thou careful for nothing except God; cast all thy care on him; he careth for thee, and make this thy great concern, to love and serve him; and then thou needest care for nothing else at all.” Oh! there are many of you people that go picking your way all through this world you are afraid to put one foot down before another, because you fear you will be in danger. If you had grace just to turn your eye to God, you might walk straight on in confidence, and say, “Though I should tread on hell itself at the next step, yet if God bade me tread there it would be heaven to me.” There is nothing like the faith that can leave care with God and have no thought but how to please him. “Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.” “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Say not, “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” Oh, happy is the man who says, “I am a gentleman commoner upon the bounties of providence. Let God send me little, it will be enough; let him send me much, it will not be too much, for I will divide my wealth with those who have less. I will trust to him. He has said, ‘Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.’ Then let famine come, I shall not starve; let the brook dry up, he will open the bottles of heaven and give me drink. Whatever shall happen to this world, yet shall I be secure against all ills.” Some people talk about being independent gentlemen. I know an independent gentleman that lives on three shillings and sixpence a week. He has nothing but parish allowance and

the charity of friends; but he says in sickness and in weariness, Jehovah will provide; if my Father knows I want more he will send me more. And if you hint to him that his parish allowance will be taken away, he will just smile, and say, "If it does not come one way it will come another; for God is the chancellor of my exchequer and he will never let my funds run too low. I shall have it for God has said it. 'They that wait on the Lord shall not want any good thing.'" That is the right kind of independency—the independency of the man who knows no dependence except upon God. My soul, let this be thy care, to serve God, and wait only upon Him.

3. Again, David meant this,—*My soul, make God thine only dependence, and never trust in anything else.* It is marvellous how God's creation illustrates my text,—David bids his soul take God for its only pillar. Have you never noticed how the world displays the power of God, in its want of any apparent support? Behold the unpillared arch of heaven; see how it stretches its gigantic span; and yet it falleth not, though it is unpropped and unbuttressed. "He hangeth the world upon nothing." What chain is it that bindeth up the stars, and keepeth them from falling? Lo, they float in ether, upheld by his omnipotent arm, who hath laid the foundations of the universe. A Christian should be a second exhibition of God's universe, his faith should be an unpillared confidence, resting on the past, and on the eternity to come, as the sure groundwork of its arch. His faith should be like the world; it should hang on nothing but the promise of God, and have no other support but that; and he himself, like the stars, should float in the ether of confidence, needing nothing to uphold him but the right hand of the Majesty on high. But, fools that we are, we will be always getting other confidences. The merchant has a man who so understands his business, that he thinks the whole establishment depends upon that one man, and if he should die or give up his situation, what would become of the business? Ah! merchant, if thou art a godly man, thou hast forgotten where thy confidence ought to be, not in thy man, but in thy God. The wife often saith, "I love the Lord, but if my husband died, where would be my dependence?" What! hast thou buttressed the almighty even with a husband's love? Trust thou in him, and make him thine only consolation. He will supply thy needs out of the riches of his fullness. Oh we should not have half the trouble we have, if we learned to live wholly upon God. But we are so dependent upon creatures; we get leaning one on another; and our dear friend, into whose ear we have told our tale of misery, seems to be quite necessary to our existence. Take heed, then; take heed! ye are trying to prop that which requires no prop, when you lean upon your friend; you are just dishonoring Christ, when you make him your joy and confidence; and when in some grievous day, your friend shall be smitten from the earth, then you will begin to feel it would have been better for you if you had leaned upon your heavenly Friend, and made no one your strength and your support but God.

This would be a good lesson for some who occupy the pulpit. There is so much time-serving everywhere. The Dissenting minister must make his prop out of his deacons and

the clergyman will too much make his prop out of some high officials in church or state, who are likely to promote him. We shall never get an outspoken gospel until we get a set of men, who say “I don’t care for the whole earth; if there is no one else right, and I conceive myself to be so, I will battle the whole earth; and I ask no man’s wish, or will, or assent. ‘Let God be true, and every man a liar.’” Oh, we want a few of those gigantic spirits who need no approvers—who can of themselves sweep their acre of men and slay them with their strong broad sword of confidence; and when we get these care-for-nothings, who care only for God, then shall the earth shake again beneath the tramp of angels, and God shall visit our land, even as he did of old.

4. Again, beloved, “My soul wait thou only upon God,” that is to say, *make God thine only guide and confidence*. When we get into trouble the first thing we do is to knock at our neighbour’s door. “Have you heard about my trouble? Come and give me your advice.” If your neighbor were prudent he would say, “My brother, have you gone to God first? I will give you no advice till God has given you his counsel?” It is laughed at as an enthusiastic idea that men should ever take counsel of God. “Oh,” say some, “it is superstitious to imagine that God will ever give to his people guidance in their temporal affairs.” It would be superstitious to you perhaps; but it is not to a David, and it is not to any other child of God. He saith, “My soul wait thou only upon God.” Christian, if thou wouldest know the path of duty take God for thy compass; if thou wouldest know the way to steer thy ship through the dark billows, put the tiller into the hand of the Almighty. Many a rock might be escaped, if we would let God take the helm; many a shoal or quicksand we might well avoid, if we would leave to his sovereign will to choose and to command. The old puritans said, “As sure as ever a Christian carves for himself he’ll cut his own fingers;” and that is a great truth. Said another old divine, “He that goes before the cloud of God’s providence goes on a fool’s errand;” and so he does. We must mark God’s providence leading us; and then let us go. But he that goes before providence will be very glad to run back again. Take your trouble, whatever it is, to the throne of the Most High and on your knees put up the prayer, “Lord, direct me.” You will not go wrong. But do not do as some do. Many a person comes to me and says, “I want your advice, sir; as my minister, perhaps you could tell me what I ought to do.” Sometimes it is about their getting married. Why, they have made up their minds before they ask me, they know that; and then they come to ask my advice. “Do you think that such and such a thing would be prudent, sir? Do you think I should change my position in life?” and so on. Now, first of all, I like to know, “Have you made your mind up?” In most cases they have—and I fear you serve God the same. We make up our mind what we are going to do, and often we go down on our knees, and say, “Lord, show me what I ought to do,” and then we follow out our intention and say, “I asked God’s direction.” My dear friend, you did ask it, but you did not follow it, you followed your own. You like God’s direction so long as it points you the way you wish to go, but if God’s direction lead the contrary to

what you considered your own interest, it might have been a very long while before you had carried it out. But if we in truth and verity do confide in God to guide us, we shall not go far wrong, I know.

5. Once again: My soul, wait thou only upon God, *for protection in times of danger*. A naval Officer tells the following singular story concerning the siege of Copenhagen, under Lord Nelson. An officer in the fleet says, "I was particularly impressed with an object which I saw three or four days after the terrific bombardment of that place. For several nights before the surrender, the darkness was ushered in with a tremendous roar of guns and mortars, accompanied by the whizzing of those destructive and burning engines of warfare, Congreve's rockets. The dreadful effects were soon visible in the brilliant lights through the city. The blazing houses of the rich, and the burning cottages of the poor, illuminated the heavens; and the wide-spreading flames, reflecting on the water, showed a forest of ships assembled round the city for its destruction. This work of conflagration went on for several nights but the Danes at length surrendered; and on walking some days after among the ruins, consisting of the cottages of the poor, houses of the rich, manufactories, lofty steeples, and humble meeting-houses, I descried, amid this barren field of desolation, a solitary house, unharmed; all around it a burnt mass, this alone untouched by the fire, a monument of mercy. 'Whose house is that?' I asked. 'That,' said the interpreter, 'belongs to a Quaker. He would neither fight nor leave his house, but remained in prayer with his family during the whole bombardment.' Surely, thought I, it is well with the righteous, God *has* been a shield to thee in battle, a wall of fire round about thee, a very present help in time of need." It might seem to be an invention of mine, only that it happens to be as authentic a piece of history as any that can be found. There is another story told, somewhat similar of that Danish war. "Soon after the surrender of Copenhagen to the English, in the year 1807, detachments of soldiers were, for a time, stationed in the surrounding villages. It happened one day that three soldiers, belonging to a Highland regiment, were set to forage among the neighboring farm-houses. They went to several but found them stripped and deserted. At length they came to a large garden, or orchard, full of apple trees, bending under the weight of fruit. They entered by a gate, and followed a path which brought them to a neat farm-house. Everything without bespoke quietness and security; but as they entered by the front door, the mistress of the house and her children ran screaming out by the back. The interior of the house presented an appearance of order and comfort superior to what might be expected from people in that station, and from the habits of the country. A watch hung by the side of the fireplace, and a neat bookcase, well filled, attracted the attention of the elder soldier. He took down a book: it was written in a language unknown to him, but the name of Jesus Christ was legible on every page. At this moment, the master of the house entered by the door through which his wife and children had just fled. One of the soldiers, by threatening signs demanded provisions the man stood firm, and undaunted, but shook his head. The soldier who held the book

approached him, and pointing to the name of Jesus Christ, laid his hand upon his heart, and looked up to heaven. Instantly the farmer grasped his hand, shook it vehemently, and then ran out of the room. He soon returned with his wife and children laden with milk, eggs, bacon, etc., which were freely tendered; and when money was offered in return, it was at first refused, but as two of the soldiers were pious men, they, much to the chagrin of their companion, insisted upon paying for all they received. When taking leave, the pious soldiers intimated to the farmer that it would be well for him to secrete his watch; by the most significant signs, he gave them to understand that he feared no evil, for his trust was in God; and that though his neighbors, on the right hand and on the left, had fled from their habitations, and by foraging parties had lost what they could not remove, nor a hair of his head had been injured, nor had he even lost an apple from his trees." The man knew that. "He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword;" so he just tried the non-resistant principle; and God, in whom he put implicit confidence, would not let him be injured. It was a remarkable thing that in the massacre of the Protestants in Ireland, a long time ago, there were thousands of quakers in the country, and only two of them were killed; and those two had not faith in their own principles; one of them ran away and hid himself in a fastness, and the other kept arms in his house; but the others, unarmed, walked amidst infuriated soldiers, both Roman Catholics and Protestants' and were never touched, because they were strong in the strength of Israel's God, and put up their sword into its scabbard, knowing that to war against another cannot be right, since Christ has said, "Resist not evil; if any man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also." "Be kind, not only to the thankful, but to the unthankful and to the evil;" "forgive your enemies;" "bless them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." But we are ashamed to do that; we do not like it; we are afraid to trust God; and until we do it we shall not know the majesty of faith, nor prove the power of God for our protection. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."

And now, my dear brethren and sisters, I cannot single out all your cases, but doubtless I have many cases here to which the text will apply. There is a poor Christian there; he does not know much more than where his next meal will come from. My brother, he that feeds the ravens will not let you starve. Instead of looking to find friends to console you, tell your story into the ears of God. As sure as the Bible is true he will not leave you. Shall a father leave his children to die? No, the granaries of earth have no key but the Almighty's will, "The cattle on a thousand hills are his." If he were hungry he would not tell us. Shall he not supply your needs out of the riches of his goodness?

"All things living he doth feed
His full hand supplies their need."

Shall he forget you, when he clothes the grass of the field, and when he makes the valleys rejoice with food? But is your anxiety about your character? Has some one been slandering you? And are you troubled and grieved, lest you should lose your good name? If a man has

called you every name in the world, do not go to law with him. "Wait only upon God." If you have been reviled in every newspaper and falsely charged in every sheet, never answer—leave it alone. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Practise non-resistance in words, as well as in deeds. Just bow yourself, and let the missiles fly over your head. Stand not up to resist. To resist slander is to make it worse. The only way to blunt the edge of calumny is to be silent: it can do no hurt when we are still. Where no wood is the fire goeth out; and if you will not refute nor answer, the fire will die out of itself. Let it alone. "Wait thou only upon God."

And now, what else is thy danger? What else is thy trouble? Art thou afraid of losing thy dearest child? Is thy husband sick? Doth thy wife lie upon the bed of languishing? These are hard troubles; they cut us to the very quick: to see our dear ones sick, and we incapable of helping them, is a trouble indeed. Then the strong man's eye doth weep, and his heart beats heavily, because those he loves are sick. But "wait thou only upon God." Go to thy chamber; tell the Lord thy dear one is ill; pour out thy heart before him, and say to him, "My Lord, spare me this trouble, if it be thy will; take not my friends away; but this know, O God, though thou slay me yet will I trust in thee. Yea,

'Shouldst thou take them all away,
Yet would I not repine;
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely thine.
There! let it go: one look from thee
Shall more than make amends."

Oh! it is a happy way of smoothing sorrow, when we can say, "We will wait only upon God." Oh, ye agitated Christians, do not dishonor your religion by always wearing a brow of care; come, cast your burden upon the Lord. I see ye staggering beneath a weight which He would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden, would be to him but as the small dust of the balance. See! the Almighty bends his shoulders, and he says, "Here, put thy troubles here. What! wilt thou bear thyself what the everlasting shoulders are ready to carry?"
No;

"Give to the winds thy fears
Hope, and be undismayed
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,
He shall lift up thy head."

No finer exhibition of the power of religion than the confidence of a Christian in the time of distress. May God vouchsafe such a carriage and bearing unto us through Jesus Christ!

II. And now I close with the EXPECTATION; and upon that I shall be very brief. The Psalmist charges his soul to wait only upon God, because he had DO expectation anywhere else but there.

I know very well what some of you are after; you have got an old grandfather, or an old grandmother, or an old great aunt, and you are most fiercely kind to them, you are most provokingly loving! You almost run to the extreme of teasing them by the frequency of your affectionate embraces. If your aunt does not know what you do it for, if she wants to know, let her write to me, I can tell her. She has a few thousand pounds; I do not say that you have any affection for them, but I should not wonder if you have some expectation of them, and that is just the reason why you are always waiting upon her. You will take care of her, because you well know which way the wind blows; and you trust that one day, if you put your sails in the right position there may be a valuable cargo brought to your haven—of course not at all through your design; you will go into deep mourning, and lament the old lady's decease, but at the same time you will feel it to be a magnificent consolation to you, almost greater than the suffering and affliction incurred, that you have become the possessor of her wealth. Now, worldly wise people always wait where their expectations are. David says, "My soul, imitate the worldly in this; wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." That is where I expect to get all I shall have, and therefore I will wait at that door which I expect will be opened with the hand of munificent grace. What is there in the world that you are expecting, except from God? You will not get it, or if you get it, it will be a curse to you. That is only a proper expectation which looks to God, and to God only. "My expectation is from him." Well, you expect to have bread to eat, and raiment to put on, till ye die, don't you? Where do you expect to get it from? The interest of that £600, or £1200 of yours in the funds. Well, if that is your expectation, and not God, he will put some bitters in that little income of yours, and you shall find it if sufficient for your sustenance, not sufficient for your comfort. But you will be provided for, because you have a large business! Well, the mill may be burned down; the trade may break the stream of prosperity may run into another's lap, and you may find yourself yet a beggar in the street, notwithstanding all you have, if that is your trust. No; if you are expecting to get aught from the world it is a poor expectation. I expect to be provided for till I die; but I expect that I shall have to draw from the bank of faith till I die, and get all I need out of the riches of God's lovingkindness. And this I know, I had rather have God for my banker than any man that hath ever lived. Surely, he never fails to honor his promises; and when we bring them to his throne he never sends them back unanswered. You must hope in God, even for temporal supplies. And after all, what a little thing the temporal supplies are! We have heard of a king, who once went into a stable and heard a stable boy singing. Said he to him, "And now, John, what do you get for your work?" "If you please sir," he said, "I get my clothes and my food." "That is all I get" said the King, "for my work." And that is all everybody gets. All else that you have Rot

besides is not yours, except to look at; and other people can do the same. When a man gets a large park I can ride through it as much as he, and I have not the trouble of keeping it in order; he may take care of it, and I am much obliged to him for doing so. I can do as the poor Chinaman did, when he bowed before the mandarin. The mandarin was covered with jewels, and the Chinaman said, "I thank you for your jewels." The mandarin was surprised: the next day he was again saluted by the man, who said as before, "I thank you for your jewels," "Why," said the mandarin, "What do you thank me for?" Said the Chinaman, "I always look at them every day, and that is as much as you do; only that you are the pack horse that has to carry them, and you have the trouble at night of taking care of them, whilst I can enjoy them just as much as you." And so, dear friends, if we are not rich, contentment can make us so. Contentment gives the poor man broad acres; contentment gives him great riches upon earth, and adds great enjoyment to the comparatively little that he has. "My expectation is from him."

But we have better expectations than that. We shall die soon; and then "my expectation is from him." Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness he will send troops of angels to carry us to his bosom? We are believing that when the pulse is faint and few, and the heart heaves heavily, that then some spirit, brighter than the noon-day sun shall draw the curtains of our bed, and look with loving eyes upon us, and whisper, "Sister, spirit, come away!" And do we not expect that then a chariot shall be brought, a triumphal chariot, such as earth's conquerors have not seen; and in it we shall be placed, and drawn by coursers of light up the eternal hills, in majesty and triumph, we shall ride to yon bright gates of pearl. Then shall the gates wide open swing, and he shall say, "Come in, ye blessed of the Lord, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world." We are expecting wreaths of aramant, and harps of gold, and crowns of glory; we are thinking when we have done with this poor clay, the poor terrestrial stuff this body's made of, we shall be made white, like spirits who now shine as stars before the throne of the majesty on high, and that we shall share those splendours and enjoy their happiness, for ever blest with them,

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

Now, "My soul, wait thou only upon God," if these be thine expectations. And if thine expectation is based upon God, my soul, live for God; live with only this care, to bless him: live, looping for a better world, but believing this world to be good enough, if we had God in it. You know what Luther said the little bird said to him. He sat upon the spray of the tree, and he sang—

"Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow; God provideth for the morrow."

And it chirped and picked up its little grain, and sang again. And yet it had no granary; it had not a handful of wheat stored up anywhere; but it still kept on with its chirping—

“Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow; God provideth for the morrow.”

Oh! ye that are not Christians, it were worth while to be Christians, if it were only for the peace and happiness that religion gives. If we had to die like dogs, yet this religion were worth having to make us live here like angels. Oh if the grave were what it seems to be, the goal of all existence, if the black nails in the coffin were not bright with stars, if death were the end and our lamps were quenched in darkness, when it was said, “Dust to dust and earth to earth.” Yet ‘twere worth while to be a child of God, only to live here.

“’Tis religion that can give sweetest pleasures whilst we live;

’Tis religion must supply solid comforts when we die.”

Remember, he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized shall be saved; and you, as well as any other, if these two things be given you, shall be saved. He that trusts in Christ alone for salvation, and then (to translate the word baptized the right way, and it can only be rightly translated one way) “is *immersed*, shall be saved.” So stands the praise: believing first, baptism afterwards; believing, the great thing, baptism the sign of it; believing the great means of grace, immersion, the outward and visible sign of the washing of the flesh and of the dedication unto God. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” May God give you grace to obey both commands, and so enter into eternal life! But remember, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” He that neglects the great essential shall perish. May God grant that none of you may know the terrible meaning of that word!

Love Thy Neighbour

A Sermon

(No. 145)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 9th, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”—[Matthew 19:19](#).

OUR SAVIOUR very often preached upon the moral precepts of the law. Many of the sermons of Christ—and what sermons shall compare with them—have not what is now currently called “the gospel” in them at all. Our Saviour did not every time he stood up to preach, declare the doctrine of election, or of atonement, or of effectual calling, or of final perseverance. No, he just as frequently spoke upon the duties of human life, and upon those precious fruits of the Spirit, which are begotten in us by the grace of God. Mark this word that I have just uttered. You may have started at it at first, but upon diligent reading of the four evangelists, you will find I am correct in stating that very much of our Saviour’s time was occupied in telling the people what they ought to do towards one another; and many of his sermons are not what our precise critics would in these times call sermons full of unction and savor; for certainly they would be far from savory to the sickly sentimental Christians who do not care about the practical part of religion. Beloved, it is as much the business of God’s minister to preach man’s duty, as it is to preach Christ’s atonement; and unless he doth preach man’s duty, he will never be blessed of God to bring man into the proper state to see the beauty of the atonement. Unless he sometimes thunders out the law, and claims for his Master the right of obedience to it, he will never be very likely to produce conviction—certainly, not that conviction which afterwards leads to conversion. This morning, I am aware, my sermon will not be very unctuous and savory to you that are always wanting the same round of doctrines, but of this I have but little care. This rough world sometimes needs to be rebuked, and if we can get at the ears of the people, it is our business to reprove them; and I think if ever there was a time when this text need to be enlarged upon, it is just now. It is so often forgotten, so seldom remembered, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

I shall notice, first of all, *the command*; secondly, I shall try and bring *some reasons for your obedience to it*; and afterwards, I shall draw *some suggestions from the law itself*.

I. First, then, THE COMMAND. It is the second great commandment. The first is, “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God,” and there, the proper standard is, thou shalt love thy God more than thyself. The second commandment is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour,” and the standard there is a little lower, but still preeminently high, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” There is the command. We can split it into three parts. *Whom am I to love? My*

neighbour. *What am I to do?* I am to love him. *How am I to do it?* I am to love him *as myself*.

First, whom am I to love? I am to love my neighbour. By the word neighbour, we are to understand any person who is near us. It comes from two old words, *nae* or *near*, (*near*) and *buer*, (*to dwell*) persons residing, or being near us, and if any one in the world is near us, he is our neighbour. The Samaritan, when he saw the wounded man on the road to Jericho, felt that he was in his neighbourhood, and that therefore he was his neighbour, and he was bound to love him. "Love thy neighbour." Perhaps he is in riches, and thou art poor, and thou livest in thy little cot side-by-side with his lordly mansion. Thou seest his estates, thou markest his fine linen, and his sumptuous raiment. God has given him these gifts, and if he has not given them to thee, covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. There will ever be differences in the circumstances of man, so let it be. Be content with thy own lot, if thou canst not better it, but do not look upon thy neighbour, and wish that he were poor as thyself; and do not aid or abet any who would rid him of his wealth, to make thee hastily rich. Love him, and then thou canst not envy him. Mayhap, on the other hand, thou art rich, and near thee reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbours. Do not scorn to own that thou art bound to love even them. The world calls them thy inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are thine equals really, though not so in station. "God hath made of one blood all people that dwell on the face of the earth." Thou art by no means better than they. They are men, and what art thou more than that? They may be men in rags, but men in rags are men; and if thou be a man arrayed in scarlet, thou art no more than a man. Take heed that thou love thy neighbour, even though he be in rags, and scorn him not, though sunken in the depths of poverty.

Love thy neighbour, too, *albeit that he be of a different religion*. Thou thinkest thyself to be of that sect which is the nearest to the truth, and thou hast hope that thou and thy compeers who think so well, shall certainly be saved. Thy neighbour thinketh differently. His religion thou sayest is unsound and untrue; love him, for all that. Let not thy differences separate him from thee. Perhaps he may be right, or he may be wrong; *he* shall be the rightest in practice, who loves the most. Possibly he has no religion at all. He disregards thy God; he breaks the Sabbath; he is confessedly an atheist; love him still. Hard words will not convert him, hard deeds will not make him a Christian. Love him straight on; his sin is not against thee, but against thy God. Thy God takes vengeance for sins committed against himself, and leave thou him in God's hands. But if thou canst do him a kind turn, if thou canst find aught whereby thou canst serve him, do it, be it day or night. And if thou makest any distinction, make it thus: Because thou art not of my religion, I will serve thee the more, that thou mayest be converted to the right; whereas thou art a heretic Samaritan, and I an orthodox Jew, thou art still my neighbour, and I will love thee with the hope that thou mayest give up thy temple in Gerizim, and come to bow in the temple of God in Jerusalem. Love thy neighbour, despite differences in religion.

Love thy neighbour, *although he oppose thee in trade*. It will be a motto hard to introduce upon the exchange, or in trade; but, nevertheless, it is one I am bound to preach to you that are merchants and tradesmen. A young man has lately started a shop which you are afraid will damage you. You must not hurt him; you must neither think nor say anything to injure him. Your business is to love him, for though he oppose you in your business, he is your neighbour still. There is another one residing near you, who is indebted to you, and if you should take from him all that he owes you, you will ruin him; but if you let him keep your money for a little, he may weather the storm, and succeed in his endeavors. It is your business to love him as yourself. Let him have your money, let him try again, and perhaps you shall have your own, and he shall be helped too. With whomsoever thou hast dealings in thy business, he is thy neighbour. With whomsoever thou tradest, be he greater or less than thou, he is thy neighbour, and the Christian law commands that thou shalt love thy neighbour. It doth not merely say that thou art not to hate him, but it tells thee to love him; and though he should thwart thy projects, though he should prevent thy obtaining wealth, though he should rob thee of thy custom—ay, though he should obscure thy fame, yet thou art bound to love him as thyself. This law makes no exception. Is he near thee, and hast thou any dealings with him? Thus says the law, “Thou shalt love him.”

Again, thou art bound to love thy neighbour, *though he offend thee with him sin*. Sometimes our spirits are overwhelmed, and our hearts are grieved, when we see the wickedness of our streets. The common habit with the harlot or the profligate, is to drive them out of society as a curse. It is not right, it is not Christian-like. We are bound to love even sinners, and not to drive them from the land of hope, but seek to reclaim even these. Is a man a rogue, a thief, or a liar? I cannot love his roguery, or I should be a rogue myself. I cannot love his lying, or I should be untrue; but I am bound to love *him* still, and even though I am wronged by him, yet I must not harbor one vindictive feeling, but as I would desire God to forgive me, so I must forgive him. And if he so sins against the law of the land, that he is to be punished (and rightly so,) I am to love him in the punishment; for I am not to condemn him to imprisonment vindictively, but I am to do it for his good, that he may be led to repent through the punishment; I am to give him such a measure of punishment as shall be adequate, not as an atonement for his crime, but to teach him the evil of it, and induce him to forsake it. But let me condemn him with a tear in my eye, because I love him still. And let me, when he is thrust into prison, take care that all his keepers attend to him with kindness, and although there be a necessity for sternness and severity in prison discipline, let it not go too far, lest it merge into cruelty, and become wanton, instead of useful. I am bound to love him, though he be sunken in vice, and degraded. The law knows of no exception. It claims my love for him. I must love him. I am not bound to take him to my house; I am not bound to treat him as one of my family. There may be some acts of kindness which would be imprudent, seeing that by doing them I might ruin others, and reward vice.

I am bound to set my *face* against him, as I am just, but I feel I ought not to set my *heart* against him, for he is my brother-man, and though the devil has besmeared his face, and spits his venom in his mouth, so that when he speaks he speaks in oaths, and when he walks, his feet are swift to shed blood, yet he is a man, and as a man he is my brother, and as a brother I am bound to love him, and if by stooping I can lift him up to something like moral dignity, I am wrong if I do not do it, for I am bound to love him as I love myself. O, I would to God that this great law were fully carried out. Ah, my hearers, you do not love your neighbours, you know you do not. You do not hardly love all the people who go to the same chapel. Certainly, you would not think of loving those who differ from you in opinion—would you? That would be too strange a charity. Why, you hardly love your own brothers and sisters. Some of you to-day are at daggers drawing with them that hung on the same breast. O, how can I expect you to love your enemies if you do not love your friends? Some of you have come here angered at your parents, and here is a brother who is angry with his sister for a word she said before he left home. O, if you can not love your brothers and sisters you are worse than heathen men and publicans. How can I expect you to obey this high and mighty command, “Love your neighbours?” But whether you obey it or not, it is mine to preach it, and not shift it to a gainsaying generation’s taste. First, we are bound to love and honor all men, simply because they are men; and we are to love, next, all those who dwell near us, not for their goodness or serviceableness toward us, but simply because the law demands it, and they are our neighbours. “Love thy neighbour as thyself.”

2. But, now, what am I to do to my neighbour? *Love* him—it is a hard word—*love* him. “Well I believe,” says one, “I never speak an unkind word of any of my neighbours. I do not know that I ever hurt a person’s reputation in my life. I am very careful to do my neighbour no damage. When I start in business I do not let my spirit of competition over throw my spirit of charity. I try not to hurt anybody.” My dear friend, that is right as far as it goes, but it does not go the whole way. It is not enough for you to say, you do not hate your neighbour, you are to love him. When you see him in the street it is not sufficient that you keep out of his way, and do not knock him down. It is not sufficient that you do not molest him by night, nor disturb his quiet. It is not a negative, it is a positive command. It is not *the not doing*, it is the doing. Thou must not injure him it is true, but thou hast not done all when thou hast not done that. Thou oughtest to love him. “Well,” says one, “when my neighbours are sick round about; if they be poor, I take a piece from the joint for dinner, and send it to them, that they may have a little food and be refreshed, and if they be exceedingly poor, I lay out my money, and see that they are taken care of.” Yes, but thou mayest do this, and not love them. I have seen charity thrown to a poor man as a bone is thrown to a dog, and there was no love in it. I have seen money given to those who needed it with not one half the politeness with which hay is given to a horse. “There it is, you want it. I suppose I must give it to you, or people will not think me liberal. Take it, I am sorry you came here. Why

don't you go to somebody else's house? I am always having paupers hanging on me." O, this is not loving our neighbour, and this is not making him love us. If we had spoken a kind word to him, and refused him, he would have loved us better than when we gave to him in an unkind manner. No, though thou feedest the poor, and visitest the sick, thou hast not obeyed the command, unless thy heart goes with thy hand, and the kindness of thy life bespeaks the kindness of thy soul. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour."

And now some one here may say, "Sir, I can not love my neighbour, you may love yours perhaps, because they may be better than mine, but mine are such an odd set of neighbours, and I try to love them, and for all I do they do but return insult." So much the more room for heroism. Wouldst thou be some feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? Sir, he who dares the most—shall win the most; and if rough be thy path of love, tread it boldly, and still on, loving thy neighbours through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they be hard to please, seek not to please *them*, but to please *thy Master*, and remember if they spurn thy love, thy Master hath not spurned it, and thy deed is as acceptable to him as if it had been acceptable to them. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour."

Now, if this love for our neighbour were carried out—love, real love—it would prohibit all *rash anger*. Who is ever angry with himself? I suppose all wise men are now and then, and I suspect we should not be righteous if we were not sometimes angry. A man who is never angry is not worth a button. He can not be a good man, for he will often see things so bad that he must be angry at them. But, remember, thou hast no right to be more angry with thy neighbour than thou art with thyself. Thou art sometimes vexed with thyself, and thou mayest sometimes be vexed with him if he has done wrong. But thine anger toward thyself is very short lived: thou soon forgivest thine own dear self; well, thou art bound just as soon to forgive him, and though thou speakest a rough word, if it be too rough, withdraw it, and if it be but rough enough, do not add more to it to make it too much so. State the truth if thou art obliged to do it, as kindly as thou canst. Be no more stern than there is need to be. Deal with others as thou wouldst deal with thyself. Above all, harbor no revenge. Never let the sun set on thine anger—it is impossible to love thy neighbour if thou dost that. Revenge renders obedience to this command entirely out of the question.

Thou art bound to love thy neighbour, then *do not neglect him*. He may be sick, he may live very near thy house, and he does not send for thee to call on him, for he says, "No, I do not like to trouble him." Remember, it is thy business to find him out. The most worthy of all poverty is that which never asks for pity. See where thy neighbours are in need; do not wait to be told of it, but find it out thyself, and give them some help. Do not neglect them; and when thou goest, go not with the haughty pride which charity often assumes, not as some superior being about to bestow a benefaction, but go to thy brother as if thou were about to pay him a debt which nature makes his due, and sit by his side, and talk to him; and if he be one that hath a high spirit, give him not thy charity as a charity, give it to him

in some other way, lest thou break his head with the very box of ointment with which thou hadst intended to have anointed him. Be thou very chary how thou speakest to him: break not his spirit. Leave thy charity behind thee, and he shall forget that, but he shall remember well thy kindness toward him in thy speech.

Love to our neighbours puts aside every sin that is akin to covetousness, and envy, and it makes us at all times ready to serve them, ready to be their footstool, if so it must be, that we may be so proved to be the children of Christ.

“Well,” says one, “I can not see that I am always to forgive; you know a worm will turn if it is trodden upon.” And is a worm to be your exemplar? A worm will turn; but a Christian will not. I think it foul scorn to take a worm for my exemplar, when I have got Christ for my copy. Christ did not turn—when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when they crucified him, and nailed him to the tree, he cried, “Father, forgive them.” Let love, unconquerable love, dwell in thy bosom, love which many waters can not quench, love which the floods can not drown. Love thy neighbours.

3. And now we have done with this command, when we have noticed *how we are to love our neighbour*. It would be a good thing if some ladies loved their neighbours as much as they loved their lap-dogs. It would be a fine thing for many a country squire if he loved his neighbours as much as he loved his pack of hounds. I think it might be a high pitch of virtue, if some of you were to love your neighbours as much as you love some favorite animal in your house. What an inferior grade of virtue, however, that appears to be! And yet it were something far superior to what some of you have attained to. You do not love your neighbour as you love your house, your estate, or your purse. How high then is, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” the gospel standard? How much does a man love himself? None of us too little, some of us too much. Thou mayest love thyself as much as thou pleasest, but take care that thou lovest thy neighbour as much. I am certain thou needest no exhortation to love thyself, thine own case will be seen to, thine own comfort will be a very primary theme of thine anxiety. Thou wilt line thine own nest well with downy feathers, if thou canst. There is no need to exhort thee to love thyself. Thou wilt do that well enough. Well, then, as much as thou lovest thyself love thy neighbour. And mark, by this is meant—thine enemy, the man who opposes thee in trade, and the man of another class. Thou oughtest to love him as thou lovest thyself.

Oh, it would turn the world upside down indeed, if this were practiced. A fine lever this would be for upsetting many things that have now become the custom of the land. In England we have a caste almost as strong as in Hindostan. My lord will not speak to any one who is a little beneath himself in dignity, and he who hath the next degree of dignity thinks the tradesman infinitely below him, and he who is a tradesman thinks a mechanic scarcely worth his notice, and mechanics according to their grades have their castes and classes too. Oh, for the day when these shall be broken down, when the impulse of the one blood shall be

felt, and when as one family each shall love the other, and feel that one class depends upon the other! It were well if each would strive to help and love the other as he ought. My fine lady, in your silks and satins, you have gone to church many a day and sat side by side with a poor old woman in her red cloak, who is as good a saint as you could be. But do you ever speak to her? Never in your life. You would not speak to her, poor soul, because you happen to be worth more hundreds of pounds a-year than she is shillings. There are you, Sir John, you come to your place, and you expect every one to be eminently respectful to you, as indeed they ought to be, for we are all honorable men, and the same text that says, "Honor the king," says also, "Honor all men." And so we are bound to honor every one of them. But you think that you, above all men, are to be worshipped. You do not condescend to men of mean estate. My dear sir, you would be a greater man by one-half if you were not to appear so great. Oh, I say again, blessed be Christ, blessed be his Father for this commandment, and blessed be the world when the commandment shall be obeyed, and we shall love our neighbours as ourselves!

II. And now shall I have to give REASONS WHY WE SHOULD OBEY THIS COMMAND.

The best reason in all the world is that with which we will begin. We are bound to love our neighbours because *God commands it*. To the Christian there is no argument so potent as God's will. God's will is the believer's law. He doth not ask what shall it profit him, what shall be the good effect of it upon others, but he simply says, doth my Father say it? Oh, Holy Spirit, help me to obey, not because I may see how it shall be always good for me, but simply because thou commandest. It is the Christian's privilege to do God's commandments, "hearkening to the voice of his Word." But some other reasons may prevail more with others of you who are not Christians.

Let me remark, then, that *selfishness itself would bid you love your neighbour*. Oh, strange that selfishness should preach a suicidal sermon; but yet if self could speak, it might, if it were wise, deliver an oration like this, "Self, love thy neighbour, for then thy neighbour will love thee. Self, help thy neighbour, for then thy neighbour will help thee. Make to thyself, O self, friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that when thou fairst they may receive thee into abiding habitations. Self, thou wantest ease; make thyself easy by treating everybody well. Self, thou wantest pleasure, thou canst get no pleasure if those around thee hate thee. Make them love thee, dear self, and so shalt thou bless thyself." Ay, even if ye are selfish, I would ye were so pre-eminently selfish, and so wisely selfish that ye would love others to make yourselves happy.

The short cut to be happy yourself is to try to make others happy. The world is bad enough, but it is not so bad as not to feel the power of kindness. Treat servants well. There are some of them that you can't mend at all, but treat them well, and as a rule they will treat you well. Treat your masters well. Some of them are gruff and bad enough, but as a class

they know good servants, and they will treat you well. There, now, if I would wish to be happy, I would not ask to have the wealth of this world, nor the things that men call comforts; the best comforts that I should desire would be loving ones round about me, and a sense that where I went I scattered happiness, and made men glad. That is the way to be happy, and selfishness itself might say, "Love thy neighbour," for in so doing thou dost love thyself; for there is such a connection between him and thee, that in loving him the stream of thy love returns into thine own heart again.

But I shall not assail you with such a paltry motive as that; it is too poor for a Christian; it should be too base even for a man. Love your neighbour, in the next place, *because that will be the way to do good in the world*. You are philanthropists, some of you subscribe to missionary societies, you subscribe to the society for orphans, and other charitable objects. I am persuaded that these institutions, though they be excellent and good things, are in some respects a loss, for now a man gives to a society one-tenth of what he would have given himself; and where an orphan would have been kept by a single family, ten families join together to keep that orphan, and so there is about one-tenth of the charity. I think the man who has the time is bound to give nothing at all to societies, but to give all away himself. Be your own society. If there be a society for the sick, then if you have enough money, be your own sick society. If you have the time go and visit the sick yourself, you will know money is well spent then, and you will spare the expense of a secretary. There is a society for finding soup for the poor. Make your own soup. Give it yourself; and if every one who gives his half-a-crown to the society would just spend half-a-sovereign to give the soup away himself, there would be more done. Societies are good; God forbid that I should speak against them; do all you can for them: but still I am afraid that they sometimes thwart individual effort, and I know they rob us of a part of the pleasure which we should have in our own benefactions—the pleasure of seeing the gleaming eye, and of hearing the grateful word when we have been our own almoners.

Dear friends, remember that man's good requires that you should be kind to your fellow creatures. The best way for you to make the world better is to be kind yourself. Are you a preacher? Preach in a surly way and in a surly tone to your church; a pretty church you will make of it before long! Are you a Sunday-school teacher? Teach your children with a frown on your face; a fine lot they will learn! Are you a master? Do you hold family prayer? Get in a passion with your servants, and say "Let us pray." A vast amount of devotion you will develop in such a manner as that. Are you a warder of a jail, and have prisoners under you? Abuse them and ill-treat them, and then send the chaplain to them. A fine preparation for the reception of the Word of God! You have poor around you; you wish to see them elevated, you say. You are always grumbling about the poverty of their dwellings, and the meanness of their tastes. Go and make a great row at them all—a fine way that would be to improve them! Now, just wash your face of that black frown, and buy a little essence of summer

somewhere, and put it on your face, and have a smile on your lip, and say, "I love you. I am no cant, but I love you, and as far as I can I will prove my love to you. What can I do for you? Can I help you over a stile? Can I give you any assistance, or speak a kind word to you? Methinks I could see after your little daughter. Can I fetch the doctor to your wife now she is ill?" All these kind things would be making the world a little better. Your jails and gibbets, and all that, never made the world better yet. You may hang men as long as you like; you will never stop murder. Hang us all, we should not be much the better for it. There is no necessity for hanging any; it will never improve the world. Deal gently, deal kindly, deal lovingly, and there is not a wolf in human shape but will be melted by kindness; and there is not a tiger in woman form but will break down and sue for pardon, if God should bless the love that is brought to bear upon her by her friend. I say again, for the world's good, love your neighbours.

And now, once more, love your neighbour, for *there is a deal of misery in the world that you do not know of*. We have often spoken hard words to poor miserable souls; we did not know their misery, but we should have known it, we should have found it out. Shall I tell you, my friend landlord, you went yesterday to get a warrant against a poor woman that has got three children. Her husband died a long while ago. She was three weeks back in her rent; the last time, to pay you, she sold off her late husband's watch and her own wedding ring; it was all that she had that was dear to her, and she paid you; and you went to her the next week, and she begged a little patience, and you think yourself highly exemplary because you had that little patience. "The woman," you have said, "I dare say is good for nothing, and if not, it is no particular business of mine whether she has got three children, or none; rent is rent, and business is business." Out she goes directly. Oh, if you could have seen that woman's heart when she stood penniless and homeless, and knew not where to send the children for the night, you would have said, "Never mind, my good woman, stop there; I can not turn a widow out of house and home." You did not do it yourself, did you? No, but you sent your agent to do it and the sin lay on you just as much for all that. You had no right to do it; you had a right in the eye of man's law but God's law says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self." A young man called upon you a little time ago. He said, "Sir, you know my little business. I have been struggling very hard, and you have kindly let me have some things on credit. But through the pressure of the times, I don't know how it is, I seem to get very hard up. I think, sir, if I could weather the next month, I might be able to get on well. I have every prospect of having a trade yet, if I could but have a little more credit, if you could possibly allow it." "Young man," you have said, "I have had a great many bad debts lately. Besides you do not bring me any good security; I can not trust you." The young man bowed, and left you. You did not know how he bowed in spirit as well as in body. That young man had a poor old mother and two sisters in the house, and he had tried to establish a little business that he might earn bread and cheese for them as well as for himself. For the

last month they have eaten scarcely anything but bread and butter, and the weakest tea has been their drink, and he has been striving hard; but some one, poorer than he seemed to be, did not pay him the little debt that was due to him, and he could not pay you. And if you had helped him, it might have been all well with him; and now what to do he can not tell. His heart is broken, his soul is swollen within him. That aged mother of his, and those girls, what shall become of them? You did not know his agony, or else you would have helped him. But you ought to have known. You never should have dismissed his case until you had known a little more about him. It would not be business-like, would it? No, sir, to be business-like is sometimes to be devil-like. But I would not have you business-like when it is so. Out on your business; be Christian-like. If you be professors, seek to serve God in obeying his commands—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

"Nay," says another, "but I am always very kind to the poor." There is a lady here who has got a tolerable share of money to spare, and to her, money is about as common as pins. And she goes to see the poor; and when she gets in, they set her a chair, and she sits down, and begins to talk to them about economy, and gives them a tolerably good lecture on that. The poor souls wonder how they are to economise any more than they do; for they eat nothing but bread, and they can not see that they can get anything much cheaper. Then she begins to exhort them about cleanliness, and makes about fifty impertinent remarks about the children's clothes. "Now," says she, "my good woman, before I leave you I will give you this tract, it is about drunkenness: perhaps you will give it to your husband." If she does he will beat her, you may depend upon it. "Come now," she says, "there is a shilling for you." And now, my lady thinks, "I love my neighbour." Did you shake hands with her? "No, sir." Did you speak lovingly to her? "Of course not. She is an inferior." Then you did not obey this command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Shall I tell you what happened after you left? That woman as soon as ever you were gone, began to cry. She started off to the minister for consolation. She said to him, "Do you know, sir, I am very thankful to God that I have had a little relief given me this morning, but my spirit was almost broken. Do you know, sir, we used to be in better circumstances. This morning Mrs. So-and-so came and talked to me in such a way, as if I had been a dog, or as if I had been a child, and though she gave me a shilling I did not know what to do. I wanted the shilling bad enough, or else I really think I should have thrown it after her. She did talk in such a way, I could not bear it. Now, if you come to see me, sir, I know you will speak kindly to me, and if you give me nothing you will not abuse me and find fault with me." "Oh," she said, "my heart is broken within me. I can not bear this, for we have seen better days, and we have been used to different treatment to this." Now, you did not love her. Your shilling, what was the good of that, if you did not put a little love on it. You might have made it as good as a golden sovereign if you had spread a little love upon it. She would have thought far more of it. "Love thy

neighbours.” Oh! would to God that I could always practice it myself, and would that I could impress it into every one of your hearts. Love thy neighbour as thou lovest thyself.

And now the last argument I shall use is one especially appropriate to the Christian. Christian, your religion *claims your love*—Christ loved you before you loved him. He loved you when there was nothing good in you. He loved you though you insulted him, though you despised him and rebelled against him. He has loved you right on, and never ceased to love you. He has loved you in your backslidings and loved you out of them. He has loved you in your sins, in your wickedness and folly. His loving heart was still eternally the same, and he shed his heart’s blood to prove his love for you. He has given you what you want on earth, and provided for you an habitation in heaven. Now Christian, your religion claims from you, that you should love as your Master loved. How can you imitate him, unless you love too? We will leave to the Mahometans, to the Jew, and to the infidel, coldheartedness and unkindness; ‘twere more in keeping with their views, but with you unkindness is a strange anomaly. It is a gross contradiction to the spirit of your religion, and if you love not your neighbour, I see not how you can be a true follower of the Lord Jesus.

And now I conclude with just a weighty suggestion or two, and I will not weary you. My text suggests first, *the guilt of us all*. My friends, if this be God’s law, who here can plead that he is not guilty? If God’s law demands I should love my neighbour, I must stand in my pulpit, and confess my guilt. In thinking of this text yesterday, my eyes ran with tears at the recollection of many a hard thing I had spoken in unwary moments. I thought of many an opportunity of loving my neighbour that I had slighted, and I labored to confess the sin. I am certain there is not one of all this immense audience who would not do the same, if he felt this law applied by the Spirit in power to his soul.

Oh! are we not guilty? Kindest of spirits, most benevolent of souls, are you not guilty? Will you not confess it? And then that suggests this remark. If no man can be saved by his works, unless he keeps this law perfectly, who can be saved by his works? Have any of you loved your neighbour all your life with all your heart? Then shall you be saved by your own deeds, if you have not broken any other command. But if you have not done it, and can not do it, then hear the sentence of the law. You have sinned, and you shall perish for your sin. Hope not to be saved by the mandate of the law. And oh! how this endears the gospel to me! If I have broken this law, and I have—and if I can not enter heaven with this law broken, precious is the Saviour who can wash me from all my sins in his blood! Precious is he that can forgive my want of charity, and pardon my want of kindness—can forgive my roughness and my rudeness, can put away all my harsh speaking, my bigotry and unkindness, and can through his all-atoning sacrifice give me a seat in heaven, notwithstanding all my sins. You are sinners this morning—you must feel it: my sermon, if blessed of God, must convince you all of guilt. Well, then, as sinners, let me preach to you the gospel. “Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall he saved.” Though he hath hitherto broken this law God shall forgive

him, and put a new heart and a right spirit into his bosom, whereby he shall be enabled to keep the law in future, at least to an eminent degree, and shall, by-and-by, attain to a crown of life in glory everlasting.

Now, I do not know whether I have been personal to anybody this morning. I sincerely hope I have. I meant to be. I know there are a great many characters in the world that must have a cap made exactly to fit them, or else they will never wear it, and I have tried as near as I could to do it. If you would not say, "How well that applied to my neighbour," but just for once say, "How well it applied to me," I shall hope that there will be some good follow from this exhortation; and though the Antinomian may turn away, and say, "Ah! it was only a legal sermon," my love to that precious Antinomian. I do not care about his opinion. My Saviour preached like that, and I shall do the same. I believe it is right that Christians should be told what they should do, and that worldlings should know what Christianity will lead us to do; that the highest standard of love, of kindness, and of law, should be uplifted in the world, and kept constantly before the people's eyes.

May God bless you, and be with you, for Jesus' sake!

The Good Man's Life and Death

A Sermon

(No. 146)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 16, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”—[Philippians 1:21](#).

HOW OMINOUSLY these words follow each other in the text—“live,” “die.” There is but a comma between them, and surely as it is in the words so is it in reality. How brief the distance between life and death! In fact there is none. Life is but death's vestibule, and our pilgrimage on earth is but a journey to the grave. The pulse that preserves our being beats our death march, and the blood which circulates our life is floating it onward to the deeps of death. To-day we see our friends in health, to-morrow we hear of their decease. We clasped the hand of the strong man but yesterday, and to-day we close his eyes. We rode in the chariot of comfort but an hour ago, and in a few more hours the last black chariot must convey us to the home of all living. Oh, how closely allied is death to life! The lamb teat sporteth in the field must soon feel the knife. The ox that loweth in the pasture is fattening for the slaughter. Trees do but grow that they may be felled. Yea, and greater things than these feel death. Empires rise and flourish, they flourish but to decay, they rise to fall. How often do we take up the volume of history, and read of the rise and fall of empires. We hear of the coronation and the death of kings. Death is the black servant who rides behind the chariot of life. See life! and death is close behind it. Death reacheth far throughout this world, and hath stamped all terrestrial things with the broad arrow of the grave. Stars die mayhap; it is said that conflagrations have been seen far off in the distant ether, and astronomers have marked the funerals of worlds, the decay of those mighty orbs that we had imagined set for ever in sockets of silver to glisten as the lamps of eternity. But blessed be God, there is one place where death is not life's brother, where life reigns alone; “to live,” is not the first syllable which is to be followed by the next, “to die.” There is a land where deathknells are never tolled, where winding-sheets are never woven, where graves are never digged. Blest land beyond the skies! To reach it we must die. But if after death we obtain a glorious immortality, our text is indeed true: “To die is gain.”

If you would get a fair estimate of the happiness of any man you must judge him in these two closely connected things, his life and his death. The heathen Solon said, “Call no man happy until he is dead; for you know not what changes may pass upon him in life.” We add to that—Call no man happy until he is dead; because the life that is to come, if that be miserable, shall far outweigh the highest life of happiness that hath been enjoyed on earth. To estimate a man's condition we must take it in all its length. We must not measure that

one thread which reacheth from the cradle to the coffin. We must go further; we must go from the coffin to the resurrection, and from the resurrection on throughout eternity. To know whether acts are profitable, I must not estimate their effects on me for the hour in which I live, but for the eternity in which I am to exist. I must not weigh matters in the scales of time; I must not calculate by the hours, minutes and seconds of the clock, but I must count and value things by the ages of eternity.

Come, then, beloved; we have before us the picture of a man, the two sides of whose existence will both of them bear inspection; we have hi life, we have his death: we have it said of his life, "*to live is Christ,*" of his death, "*to die is gain;*" and if the same shall be said of any of you, oh! ye may rejoice! Ye are amongst that thrice happy number whom the Lord hath loved, and whom he delighteth to honor.

We shall now divide our text very simply into these two points, *the good man's life, and the good man's death.*

I. As to HIS LIFE, we have that briefly described thus: "For me to live is Christ." The believer did not always live to Christ. When he was first born into this world he was a slave of sin, and an heir of wrath, even as others. Though he may have afterwards become the greatest of saints, yet until divine grace hath entered his heart, he is "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." He only begins to live to Christ when God the Holy Spirit convinceth him of his sin, and of his desperate evil nature, and when by grace he is brought to see the dying Saviour making a propitiation for his guilt. From that moment when by faith he sees the slaughtered victim of Calvary, and casts his whole life on him, to be saved, to be redeemed, to be preserved, and to be blest by the virtue of his atonement and the greatness of his grace, from that moment the man begins to live to Christ.

And now shall we tell you as briefly as we can what living to Christ means.

It means, first, that *the life of a Christian derives its parentage from Christ.* "For me to live is Christ." The righteous man has two lives. He has one which he inherited from his parents; he looks back to an ancestral race of which he is the branch, and he traces his life to the parent stock; but he has a second life, a life spiritual, a life which is as much above mere mental life, as mental life is above the life of the animal or the plant; and for the source of this spiritual life he looks not to father or mother, nor to priest nor man, nor to himself, but he looks to Christ. He says, "O Lord Jesus, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, thou art my spiritual parent; unless thy Spirit had breathed into my nostrils the breath of a new, holy and spiritual life, I had been to this day "dead in trespasses and sins." I owe my third principle, my spirit, to the implantation of thy grace. I had a body and a soul by my parents, I have received the third principle, the spirit from thee, and in thee I live, and move, and have my being. My new, my best, my highest my most heavenly life, is wholly derived from thee. To thee I ascribe it. My life is hid with Christ in God. It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." And so the Christian says, "For me to live is Christ," because

for me to live is to live a life whose parentage is not of human origin, but of divine, even of Christ himself. Again he intended to say, that Christ was *the sustenance of his life*, the food his newborn spirit fed upon. The believer hath three parts to be sustained. The body, which must have its proper nutriment; the soul, which must have knowledge and thought to supply it; and the spirit which must feed on Christ. Without bread I become attenuated to a skeleton, and at last I die; without thought my mind becomes dwarfed, and, and dwindles itself until I become the idiot, with a soul that hath just life, but little more. And without Christ my newborn spirit must become a vague shadowy emptiness. It cannot live unless it feeds on that heavenly manna which came down from heaven. Now the Christian can say, "The life that I live is Christ," because Christ is the food on which he feeds and the sustenance of his new-born Spirit.

The apostle also meant, that *the fashion of his life was Christ*. I suppose that every man living has a model by which he endeavors to shape his life. When we start in life, we generally select some person, or persons, whose combined virtues shall be to us the mirror of perfection. "Now," says Paul, "if you ask me after what fashion I mould my life, and what is the model by which I would sculpture my being, I tell you, it is Christ. I have no fashion, no form, no model by which to shape my being, except the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the true Christian, if he be an upright man, can say the same. Understand, however what I mean by the word *"upright."* An upright man mean" a straightt up man—a man that does not cringe and bow, and fawn to other men's feet; a man that does not lean for help on other men, but just stands with his head heavenward, in all the dignity of his independence, leaning nowhere except on the arm of the Omnipotent. Such a man will take Christ alone to be his model and pattern. This is the very age of conventionalities. People dare not now do a thing unless everybody else does the same. You do not often say, "Is a thing right?" The most you say is, "Does so-and-so do it?" You have some great personage or other in your family connection, who is looked upon as being the very standard of all propriety; and if he do it, then you think you may safely do it. And oh! what an outcry there is against a man who dares to be singular, who just believes that some of your conventionalities are trammels and chains, and kicks them all to pieces and says, "I am free!" The world is at him in a minute; all the ban-dogs of malice and slander are at him, because he says, "I will not follow your model! I will vindicate the honor of my Master, and not take your great masters to be for ever my pattern." Oh! I would to God that every statesman, that every minister, that every Christian were free to hold that his only form, and his only fashion for imitation, must be the character of Christ. I would that we could scorn all superstitious attachments to the ancient errors of our ancestors; and whilst some would be for ever looking upon age and upon hoary antiquity with veneration, I would we had the courage to look upon a thing, not according to its age, but according to its rightness, and so weigh everything, not by its novelty, or by its antiquity, but by its conformity to Christ Jesus and his holy Gospel; rejecting that which is not, though

it be hoary with years, and believing that which is, even though it be but the creature of the day, and saying with earnestness, "For me to live is not to imitate this man or the other, but 'for me to live is Christ.'"

I think, however, that the very center of Paul's idea would be this: *The end of his life is Christ*. You think you see Paul land upon the shores of Philippi. There, by the river-side, were ships gathered and many merchant men. There you would see the merchant busy with his ledger, and overlooking his cargo, and he paused and put his hand upon his brow, and said as he griped his money-bag, "For me to live is gold." And there you see his humbler clerk, employed in some plainer work, toiling for his master, and he, perspiring with work mutters between his teeth, "For me to live is to gain a bare subsistence." And there stands for a moment to listen to him, one with a studious face and a sallow countenance, and with a roll full of the mysterious characters of wisdom. "Young man," he says, "for me to live is learning." "Aha! aha!" says another, who stands by, clothed in mail, with a helmet on his head, "I scorn your modes of life, for me to live is glory." But there walks one, a humble tent-maker, called Paul; you see the lineaments of the Jew upon his face, and he steps into the middle of them all and says, "For me to live is Christ." Oh! how they smile with contempt upon him, and how they scoff at him, for having chosen such an object! "For me to live is Christ." And what did he mean! The learned man stopped, and said, "Christ! who is he? Is he that foolish, mad fellow, of whom I have heard, who was executed upon Calvary for sedition?" The meek reply is, "It is he who died, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." "What?" says the Roman soldier, "and do you live for a man who died a slave's death? What glory will you get by fighting his battles?" What profit is there in your preaching, chimes in the trader. Ah! and even the merchant's clerk thought Paul mad; for he said, "How can he feed his family? how will he supply his wants if all he liveth for is to honor Christ?" Ay, but Paul knew what he was at. He was the wiser man of them all. He knew which way was right for heaven, and which would end the best. But, right or wrong, his soul was wholly possessed with the idea—"For me to live is Christ."

Brethren and sisters, can you say, as professing Christians, that you live up to the idea of the apostle Paul? Can you honestly say that for you to live is Christ? I will tell you my opinion of many of you. You join our churches you are highly respectable men; you are accepted among us as true and real Christians; but in all honesty and truth I do not believe that for you to live is Christ. I see many of you whose whose thoughts are engrossed with the things of earth; the mere getting of money; the amassing of wealth, seems to be your only object. I do not deny that you are liberal, I will not dare to say that you are not generous, and that your cheque-book does not often bear the mark of some subscription for holy purposes, but I dare to say, after all, that you cannot in honesty say that you live wholly for Christ. You know that when you go to your shop or your warehouse, you do not think, in doing business, that you are doing it for Christ; you dare not be such a hypocrite as to say

so. You must say that you do it for self-aggrandisement, and for family advantage. "Well!" says one, "and is that a mean reason?" By no means; not for you, if you are mean enough to ask that question, but for the Christian it is. He professes to live for Christ; then how IS it he dares to profess to live for his Master, and yet does not do so, but lives for mere worldly gain? Let me speak to many a lady here. You would be shocked if I should deny your Christianity. You move in the highest circles of life, and you would be astonished if I should presume to touch your piety, after your many generous donations to religious objects; but I dare to do so. You—what do you do? You rise late enough in the day: you have your carriage out, and call to see your friends, or leave your card by way of proxy. You go to a party in the evening; you talk nonsense, and come home and go to bed. And that is your life from the beginning of the year to the end. It is just one regular round. There comes the dinner or the ball, and the conclusion of the day; and then Amen, so be it, for ever. Now you don't live for Christ. I know you go to church regularly, or attend at some dissenting chapel; all well and good. I shall not deny your piety, according to the common usage of the term, but I deny that you have got to anything like the place where Paul stood when he said, "For me to live is Christ." I, my brethren, know that with much earnest seeking I have failed to realize the fullness of entire devotion to the Lord Jesus. Every minister must sometimes chasten himself and say, "Am I not sometimes a little warped in my utterances? Did I not in some sermon aim to bring out a grand thought instead of stating a home truth? Have I not kept back some warning that I ought to have uttered, because I feared the face of man?" Have we not all good need to chasten ourselves, because we must say that we have not lived for Christ as we should have done? And yet there are, I trust, a noble few, the *elite* of God's elect, a few chosen men and women on whose heads there is the crown and diadem of dedication, who can truly say, "I have nothing in this world I cannot give to Christ—I have said it, and mean what I have said—

'Take my soul and body's powers,
All my goods and all my hours,
All I have, and all I am.'

Take me, Lord, and take me for ever." These are the men who make our missionaries; these are the women to make our nurses for the sick, these are they that would dare death for Christ; these are they who would give of their substance to his cause; these are they who would spend and be spent, who would bear ignominy, and scorn, and shame if they could but advance their Master's interest. How many of this sort have I here this morning? Might I not count many of these benches before I could find a score? Many there are who do in a measure carry out this principle; but who among us is there (I am sure he standeth not here in this pulpit) that can dare to say he hath lived wholly for Christ, as the apostle did? And yet, till there be more Pauls, and more men dedicated to Christ, we shall never see God's kingdom come, nor shall we hope to see his will done on earth, even as it is in heaven.

Now, this is the true life of a Christian, its source, its sustenance, its fashion, and its end, all gathered up in one word, Christ Jesus; and, I must add, its happiness, and its glory, is all in Christ. But I must detain you no longer.

II. I must go to the second point, THE DEATH OF THE CHRISTIAN. Alas, alas, that the good should die; alas, that the righteous should fall! Death, why dost thou not hew the deadly upas? Why dost thou not mow the hemlock? Why dost thou touch the tree beneath whose spreading branches weariness hath rest? Why dost thou touch the flower whose perfume hath made glad the earth? Death, why dost thou snatch away the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight? If thou wouldst use thine axe, use it upon the cumber-grounds, the trees that draw nourishment, but afford no fruit; thou mightest be thanked then. But why wilt thou cut down the cedars, why wilt thou fell the goodly trees of Lebanon? O Death, why dost thou not spare the church? Why must the pulpit be hung in black; why must the missionary station be filled with weeping? Why must the pious family lose its priest, and the house its head? O Death, what art thou at? touch not earth's holy things; thy hands are not fit to pollute the Israel of God. Why dost thou put thine hand upon the hearts of the elect? Oh stay thou, stay thou; spare the righteous, Death, and take the bad! But no, it must not be; death comes and smites the goodliest of us all; the most generous, the most prayerful, the most holy, the most devoted must die. Weep, weep, weep, O church, for thou hast lost thy martyrs; weep, O church, for thou hast lost thy confessors, thy holy men are fallen. Howl, fir tree, for the cedar hath fallen, the godly fail, and the righteous are cut off. But stay awhile; I hear another voice. Say ye thus unto the daughter of Judah, spare thy weeping. Say ye thus unto the Lord's flock, Cease, cease thy sorrow thy martyrs are dead, but they are glorified; thy ministers are gone, but they have ascended up to thy Father, and to their Father, thy brethren are buried in the grave, but the archangel's trumpet shall awake them, and their spirits are ever now with God.

Hear ye the words of the text, by way of consolation, "To die is gain." Not such gain as thou wishest for, thou son of the miser, not such gain as thou art hunting for, thou man of covetousness and self-love; a higher and a better gain is that which death brings to a Christian.

My dear friends, when I discoursed upon the former part of the verse, it was all plain. No proof was needed; ye believed it, for you saw it clearly. "To live is Christ," hath no paradox in it. But "To die is gain," is one of the Gospel riddles which only the Christian can truly understand. To die is not gain if I look upon the merely visible, to die is loss, it is not gain. Hath not the dead man lost his wealth? though he had piles of riches, can he take anything with him? Hath it not been said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And which of all thy goods, canst thou take with thee? The man had a fair estate and a goodly mansion; he hath lost that. He can no more tread those painted halls, nor walk those verdant lawns.

He had abundance of fame and honor; he hath lost that, so far as his own sense of it is concerned, though still the harp string trembles at his name. He has lost his wealth, and buried though he may be in a costly tomb, yet is he as poor as the beggar who looked upon him in the street in envy. That is not gain, it is loss and he hath lost his friends: he hath left behind him a sorrowing wife and children, fatherless, without his guardian care; he hath lost the friend of his bosom, the companion of his youth. Friends are there to weep over him, but they cannot cross the river with him; they drop a few tears into his tomb, but with him they must not and cannot go. And hath he not lost all his learning, though he hath toiled ever so much to fill his brain with knowledge? What is he now above the servile slave, though he hath acquired all knowledge of earthly things? Is it not said,

“Their memory and their love are lost
Alike unknowing and unknown?”

Surely death is loss. Hath he not lost the songs of the sanctuary and the prayers of the righteous? Hath he not lost the solemn assembly, and the great gathering of the people? No more shall the promise enchant his ear, no more shall the glad tidings of the gospel wake his soul to melody. He sleeps in the dust, the Sabbath-bell tolls not for him, the sacramental emblems are spread upon the table, but not for him. He hath gone to his grave, he knoweth not that which shall be after him. There is neither work nor device in the grave, whither we all are hastening. Surely death is loss. When I look upon thee, thou clay-cold corpse, and see thee just preparing to be the palace of corruption and the carnival for worms, I cannot think that thou hast gained. When I see that thine eye hath lost light, and thy lip hath lost its speech, and thine ears have lost hearing, and thy feet have lost motion, and thy heart hath lost its joy, and they that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders have failed, and no sounds of tabret and of harp wake up thy joys, O clay-cold corpse, than hast lost, lost immeasurably. And yet my text tells me it is not so. It says, “To die is gain.” It looks as if it could not be thus, and certainly it is not, so far as I can see. But put to your eye the telescope of faith, take that magic glass which pierces through the veil that parts us from the unseen. Anoint your eyes with eyesalve, and make them so bright that they can pierce the ether and see the unknown worlds. Come, bathe yourself in this sea of light, and live in holy revelation and belief, and then look, and oh how changed the scene! Here is the corpse, but there the spirit; here is the clay, but there the soul, here is the carcase, but there the seraph. He is supremely blest; his death is gain. Come now, what did he lose? I will show that in everything he lost, he gained far more. He lost his friends, did he? His wife, and his children, his brethren in church fellowship, are all lea to weep his loss. Yes, he lost them, but, my brethren what did he gain? He gained more friends than e'er he lost. He had lost many in his lifetime, but he meets them all again. Parents, brethren and sisters who had died in youth or age, and passed the stream before him, all salute him on the further brink. There the mother meets her infant, there the father meets his children, there the venerable patriarch

greet his family to the third and fourth generation, there brother clasps brother to his arms, and husband meets with wife, no more to be married or given in marriage, but to live together, like the angels of God. Some of us have more friends in heaven than in earth. We have more dear relations in glory, than we have here. It is not so with all of us, but with some it is so; more have crossed the stream than are left behind. But if it be not so, yet what friends we have to meet us there! Oh, I reckon on the day of death if it were for the mere hope of seeing the bright spirits that are now before the throne; to clasp the hand of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, to look into the face of Paul the apostle, and grasp the hand of Peter; to sit in flowery fields with Moses and David, to bask in the sunlight of bliss with John and Magdalene. Oh how blest! The company of poor imperfect saints on earth is good; but how much better the society of the redeemed. Death is no loss to us by way of friends. We leave a few, a little band below, and say to them, "Fear not little flock," and we ascend and meet the armies of the living God, the hosts of his redeemed. "To die is gain." Poor corpse! thou hast lost thy friends on earth; nay, bright spirit, thou hast received a hundred fold in heaven.

What else did we say he lost? We said he lost all his estate, all his substance and his wealth. Ay, but he has gained infinitely more. Though he were rich as Cræsus, yet he might well give up his wealth for that which he hath attained. Were his fingers bright with pearls, and hath he lost their brilliancy? The pearly gases of heaven glisten brighter far. Had he gold in his storehouse? Mark ye, the streets of heaven are paved with gold, and he is richer far. The mansions of the redeemed are far brighter dwelling places than the mansions of the richest here below. But it is not so with many of you. You are not rich, you are poor. What can you lose by death? You are poor here, you shall be rich there. Here you suffer toil, there you shall rest for ever. Here you earn your bread by the sweat of your brow but there, no toil Here wearily you cast yourself upon your bed at the week's end, and sigh for the Sabbath, but there Sabbaths have no end. Here you go to the house of God, but you are distracted with worldly cares and thoughts of suffering; but there, there are no groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues, Death will be gain to you in point of riches and substance.

And as for the *means of grace* which we leave behind, what are they when compared with what we shall have hereafter? Oh, might I die at this hour, I think I would say something like this, "Farewell Sabbaths,—I am going to the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Farewell minister; I shall need no candle, neither light of the sun, when the Lord God shall give me light, and be my life for ever and ever. Farewell ye songs and sonnets of the blessed; farewell, I shall not need your melodious burst; I shall hear the eternal and unceasing hallelujahs of the beatified. Farewell, ye prayers of God's people; my spirit shall hear for ever the intercessions of my Lord, and join with the noble army of martyrs in crying, 'O Lord, how long?' Farewell, O Zion! Farewell, house of my love, home of my life! Farewell, ye temples where God's people sing and pray; farewell, ye tents of Jacob, where they daily burn their offering!-

I am going to a better Zion than you, to a brighter Jerusalem, to a temple that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!" O my dear friends, in the thought of these things, do we not, some of us, feel as if we could die!

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon th' eternal shore.
One army of the living God,
At his command we bow,
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

We have not come to the margin yet, but we shall be there soon: we soon expect to die. And again, one more thought. We said that when men died they lost their knowledge, we correct ourselves. Oh, no, when the righteous die they know infinitely more than they could have known on earth.

"There shall I see and hear and know
All I desired or wished below;
And every power find sweet employ,
In that eternal world of joy."

"Here we see through a glass darkly, but there face to face." There, what "eye hath not seen nor ear heard" shall be fully manifest to us. There, riddles shall be unravelled, mysteries made plain, dark texts enlightened, hard providences made to appear wise. The meanest soul in heaven knows more of God than the greatest saint on earth. The greatest saint on earth may have it said of him, "Nevertheless he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Not our mightiest divines understand so much of theology as the lambs of the flock of glory. Not the greatest master-minds of earth understand the millionth part of the mighty meanings which have been discovered by souls emancipated from clay. Yes, brethren, "To die is gain." Take away, take away that hearse, remove that shroud; come, put white plumes upon the horse's heads and let gilded trappings hang around them. There, take away that fife, that shrill sounding music of the death march. Lend me the trumpet and the drum. O hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah; why weep we the saints to heaven; why need we lament? They are not dead, they are gone before. Stop, stop that mourning, refrain thy tears, clap your hands, clap your hands.

"They are supremely blest,
Have done with care and sin and woe;
And with their Saviour rest."

What! weep! weep! for heads that are crowned with coronals of heaven? Weep, weep for hands that grasp the harps of gold? What, weep for eyes that see the Redeemer? What,

weep for hearts that are washed from sin, and are throbbing with eternal bliss! What, weep for men that are in the Saviour's bosom?—No, weep for yourselves, that you are here. Weep that the mandate has not come which bids *you* to die. Weep that *you* must tarry. But weep not for them. I see them turning back on you with loving wonder, and they exclaim, "Why weepest thou?" What, weep for poverty that it is clothed in riches? What, weep for sickness, that it hath inherited eternal health? What, weep for shame, that it is glorified; and weep for sinful mortality, that it hath become immaculate? Oh, weep not, but rejoice. "If ye knew what it was that I have said unto you, and whither I have gone, ye would rejoice with a joy that no man should take from you." "To die is gain." Ah, this makes the Christian long to die—makes him say,

"Oh, that the word were given!

O Lord of Hosts, the wave divide,

And land us all in heaven!"

And now, friends, does this belong to you all? Can you claim an interest in it? Are you living to Christ? Does Christ live in you? For if not, your death will not be gain. Are you a believer in the Saviour? Has your heart been renewed, and your conscience washed in the blood of Jesus? If not, my bearer, I weep for thee. I will save my tears for lost friends; there, with this handkerchief I'd staunch mine eyes for ever for my best beloved that shall die, if those tears could save you. O, when you die, what a day! If the world were hung in sackcloth, it could not express the grief that you would feel. You *die*. O death! O death! how hideous art thou to men that are not in Christ! And yet, my hearer, thou shalt soon die. Save me thy bed of shrieks, thy look of gall, thy words of bitterness! Oh that thou couldst be saved the dread hereafter! Oh! the wrath to come! the wrath to come! the wrath to come! who is he that can preach of it? Horrors strike the guilty soul! It quivereth upon the verge of death; no, on the verge of hell. It looketh over, clutching hard to life, and it heareth there the sullen groans, the hollow moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts, which come up from the pit that is bottomless, and it clutcheth firmly to life, clasps the physician, and bids him hold, lest he should fall into the pit that burneth. And the spirit looketh down and seeth all the fiends of everlasting punishments, and back it recoileth. But die it must. It would barter all it hath to coin an hour; but no, the fiend hath got its grip, and down it must plunge. And who can tell the hideous shriek of a lost soul? It cannot reach heaven; but if it could, it might well be dreamed that it would suspend the melodies of angels, might make even God's redeemed weep, if they could hear the wailings of a damned soul. Ah! you men and women, ye have wept; but if you die unregenerate, there will be no weeping like that, there will be no shriek like that, no wail like that. May God spare us from ever hearing it or uttering it ourselves! Oh, how the grim caverns of Hades startle, and how the darkness of night is frightened, when the wail of a lost soul comes up from the ascending flames, whilst it is descending in the pit. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Christ is preached to you. "This is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Believe on him and live, ye guilty, vile, perishing; believe and live. But this know—if ye reject my message, and depise my Master, in that day when he shall judge the world in righteousness by that man, Jesus Christ, I must be a swift witness against you. I have told you—tat your soul’s peril reject it. Receive my message, and you are saved; reject it—take the responsibility on your own head. Behold, my skirts are clear of your blood. If ye be damned, it is not for want of warning. Oh God grant, ye may not perish.

The Sound in the Mulberry Trees

A Sermon

(No. 147)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 31, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.”—[2 Samuel 5:24](#).

DAVID HAD just fought the Philistines in this very valley, and gained a signal victory, so that he said, “the Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me as the breach of waters.” The Philistines had come up in great hosts, and had brought their gods with them, that like Israel, when the ark of the Lord was brought into their midst, they might feel quite sure of victory. However, by the help of God David easily put them to rout, burned their images in the fire, and obtained a glorious victory over them. Note, however, that when they came a second time against David, David did not go up to fight them, without enquiring of the Lord. Once he had been victorious; he might have said, as many of us have said, in fact, in other cases—“I shall be victorious again; I may rest quite sure that if I have triumphed once I shall triumph yet again. Wherefore should I go and seek at the Lord’s hands?” Not so, now David. He had gained one victory by the strength of the Lord; he would not venture upon another, until he had ensured the same. He went and asked the sacred oracle, “Shall I go up against them?” and when he was informed that he was not immediately to march against them, but to encamp so as to surprise them at the mulberry-trees, he did not demur a single moment to the mandate of God; and when he was bidden to wait until he should hear the sound in the tops of the mulberry-trees before he went to fight, he was not in an ill haste to rush to battle at once, but he tarried until the mulberry-trees began to sing at the top by reason of the wind that rushed along the leaves. He would wait until God’s sign was given; he said, “I will not lift my spear nor my hand till God hath bidden me do it, lest I should go to war at my own charges, and lose all I have obtained.”

My brethren, let us learn from David to take no steps without God. The last time you moved, or went into another business, or changed your situation in life, you asked God’s help, and then did it, and you were blessed in the doing of it. You have been up to this time a successful man, you have always sought God, but do not think that the stream of providence necessarily runs in a continuous current; remember, you may to-morrow without seeking God’s advice venture upon a step which you will regret but once, and that will be until you die. You have been wise hitherto, it may be because you have trusted in the Lord with all your heart, and have not leaned to your own understanding; you have said like David, “Let

us enquire of the Lord,” and like Jehoshaphat, who said to Ahab, “I will not go up until I have enquired of the Lord;” and you have not to ask priests of Baal, but you have said, “Is there not here one, prophet of the Lord, that I may enquire at his hands?” Now, keep on in the same way: do not, I beseech you, go before the cloud. If Providence tarries, tarry till Providence comes, never go before it. He goes on a fool’s errand who goes before God but he walks in a blessed path who sees the footsteps of Providence, and reads the map of Scripture, and so discovers, “This is the way wherein I am to walk.” This may be imputed to some one here; I thought I would begin with it, for it may be I have some young man here who is about unadvisedly to take a step which may be his ruin, temporarily; I beseech him, if he loves the Lord—I speak to none but those who are already Christians,—I beseech him not to venture until he has sought counsel of God, and unless he has a firm conviction that he is doing it not merely for his own advantage but to help him in serving his God the better. Unless he can be sure that he has God’s approval of his steps let me—by the mistake that many have made, by the mischief that he will do himself unless he listens to me,—let me beseech him to stop, and not take so much as one half a step, or lift his foot, until he has sought of God, and has had the answer, “Go up against them.”

Thus I have introduced the text: but now I would refer to it in another way altogether. David was not to go to battle, until he heard a sound of a rustling in the tops of the mulberry trees. There was a calm, perhaps; and God’s order to David was, “You are not to begin to fight until the wind begins rustling through the tops of the mulberry trees;” or as the Rabbis have it, and it is a very pretty conceit if it be true, the footsteps of angels walking along the tops of the mulberry trees make them rustle; that was the sign for them to fight, when God’s cherubim were going with them, when they should come, who can walk through the clouds and fly through the air, led by the great Captain himself, walking along the mulberry trees, and so make a rustle by their celestial footsteps. How true that may be, I cannot tell; my remark is only this—that there are certain signs which ought to be indications to us of certain duties. I shall use the verse in this way. First, *there are certain special duties, which are not duties to everybody, but only to some people*. If we wish to know whether we are to perform these duties, we must seek signs concerning them, and not go and rush into a duty to which we are not called, unless we get a sign, even as David got the rustling among the mulberry leaves. And then I should use it, in the second place, thus, *there are certain duties which are common to all of us*; but when we see some sign of God’s Holy Spirit being in motion, or some other signs, *these are seasons when we ought to be more than ever active*, and more than ever earnest in the service of our Master.

I. First, then, in regard to SPECIAL DUTIES. I shall confine myself, I think to one. The office of the ministry is a special duty. I do not believe, as some do, that it is the business of everyone of us to preach; I believe it is the business of a great many people who do preach to hold their tongues. I think that if they had waited until God had sent them they would

have been at home now; and there be some men who are not fit to edify a doorpost, who yet think that if they could but once enter the pulpit they would attract a multitude. They conceive preaching to be just the easiest thing in all the world, and while they have not power to speak three words correctly, and have not any instruction from on high, and never were intended for the pulpit, for the mere sake of the honor or the emolument, they rush into the ministry. There are hundreds of men in the ministry starving for want of bread and entirely unsuccessful, and I believe in regard to some of them that the best thing they could do would be to open a grocer's shop. They would be doing more to serve God and to serve the church if they would take a business, and preach now and then as they had time to study, or else give it up altogether, and let somebody come and preach to the people who had something to tell them. For alas, alas, a preacher who has nothing to say will not only do no good, but will do a great deal of harm. The people who hoar him get disgusted at the very name of a place of worship; and they only look at it as a kind of stocks, where they are to sit for an hour with their feet fast, quiet and still listening to a man who is saying nothing, because he has nothing to say. I would not advise all of you to be preachers. I do not believe God ever intended that you should. If God had intended all his people to be preachers, I wonder how even He in his wisdom could have found them all congregations; because were all preachers where were the hearers! No, I believe the office of the ministry, though not like that of the priesthood, as to any particular sanctity, or any particular power that we possess, is yet like the priesthood in this—that no man ought to take it to himself, save he that is called "hereunto, as was Aaron. No man has any right to address a congregation on things spiritual, unless he believes that God was given him a special calling to the work, and unless he has also in due time received certain seals which attest his ministry as being the ministry of God. The rightly ordained minister is ordained not by the laying on of bishop's or presbyter's hands, but by the Spirit of God himself, whereby the power of God is communicated in the preaching of the word.

There may be some here who will say "How am I to know whether I am called to preach?" My brethren, you will find it out by-and-by, I dare say; and if you are sincerely desirous to know when you are in the path of duty in endeavoring to preach, I must bid you do as David did. He noted the rustling in the leaves of the mulberry trees. And I must have you notice certain signs. Do you want to know whether you can preach? Ask yourself this question, "Can I pray? When I have been called upon in the prayer-meeting, have I been enabled to put my words together and has God helped me in the matter?" So far so good. "Well then I will go and try, I will preach in the street, for instance." Suppose nobody listens to me, suppose I go and take a room, or go to a chapel, and nobody comes to hear, well, there is no rustling among the mulberry trees; I had better stop. Suppose I go to my wife and children, and take a text, and just preach a little wee bit to them and to the neighbors suppose, after I have preached to them, I should feel that they could preach great deal better

to me, there is no rustling among the mulberry trees, and I had better give it up. And suppose if, after having preached for sometime I hear of none who have been brought to Christ, there is no rustling among the mulberry trees, I think the best thing I could do is, to let somebody else try for suppose I have not been called to the ministry, it would have been a fearful thing for me to have occupied the watchman's place, without having received the watchman's commission. He that should take upon himself to be a policeman, and go and do the work of arresting others, without having received a commission, must be in danger of being taken up himself, for being a deceiver. And it may be, if I had not been called to the ministry, and had no seal of it, I had better leave it alone, lest I go without God's commission, and that would never answer my purpose, to begin without his having sent me; for if he have not sent me, it may be I shall break down in my errand, and do no good. I do not ask whether you are much instructed or learned, or all that; I do not need to ask you; for I do not care about it myself. But I ask you these questions. Have you tried to address a Sabbath-school? have you gained the attention of the children. Having tried to address a few people, when they have been gathered together, have you found they would listen to you after you had preached? Had you any evidence and any sign that would lead you to believe that souls were blessed under you? Did any of the saints of God who were spiritually-minded, tell you that their souls were fed by your sermon? Did you hear of any sinner convinced of sin? Have you any reason to believe that you have had a soul converted under you? If not, if you will take one's advice for what it is good for—and I believe it is advice which God's Holy Spirit would have me give you—you had better give it up. You will make a very respectable Sunday-school teacher, you will do very well in a great many other ways; but unless these things have been known by you, unless you have these evidences, you may say you have been called and all that; I don't believe it. If you had been called to preach, there would have been some evidence and some sign of it. I remember, two years ago, some man wrote to me a note, telling me that it had been said to his heart and God the Holy Spirit had revealed it to him, that I was to let him preach in this chapel. Well, I just wrote to him, and told him that was a one-sided revelation, and that as soon as ever God revealed it to me that I was to let him preach here, then he should; but until then I did not see that the revelation was quite a square one. Why should it be revealed to him and not revealed to me? I have heard no more of him, and I have not had it revealed to me either; so that I do not suppose he will make his appearance here. I say this because, though to a great many of you it would be nothing at all, there are a large number of young men here who preach. I thank God for them—for anyone who is able to preach. But I will thank God to stop those who cannot preach, because if they go about to preach and have not the ability, and God has not sent them, they will just make fools of themselves, though that you should not be greatly surprised at, because they may not be far off already; but they will make the very Gospel itself come into contempt. If they profess to preach who have not the call from God's Spirit, when they

begin to talk they will just bring more scandal upon the cross by a rash defense of it than would have come if they had left it alone. Now, take care about that. I would discourage none; I would say to every young man who has a grain of ability, and believes he has been called of God, and everyone who has really been blessed, "So far as I can help you I will help you, I will do so to the very uttermost, if you need my help, and I pray God Almighty to bless you, and make you more and more abundantly useful; for the Church needs many pastors and evangelists." But if there is no soul converted under you, if you are not qualified to preach at all, you shall have my equally earnest prayers for you that God may speed you—and I shall pray for you in this way, that God will speed you by making you hold your tongue. I waited till I heard the sound among the mulberry trees, else had I been uncalled and unsent. David waited; he would not go to the battle till he had heard the signal from on high, which was the signal for the battle, and the signal of the commencement of warfare.

II. But now, my brethren I come to something more practical to many of you; you do not profess to be called to preach; THERE ARE CERTAIN DUTIES BELONGING TO ALL CHRISTIANS WHICH ARE TO BE SPECIALLY PRACTISED AT SPECIAL SEASONS. First, concerning *the Christian church at large*. The whole of the Christian church should be very prayerful, always seeking the unction of the Holy One to rest upon their hearts, that the kingdom of Christ may come and that his will be done on earth even as it is in heaven; but there are times when God seems to favor Zion, when there are great movements made in the church, when revivals are commenced, when men are raised up whom God blesses; that ought to be to you like "a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." We ought then to be doubly prayerful, doubly earnest, wrestling more at the throne, than we have been wont to do. I think this is just the time that demands your extraordinary and special prayers. I look upon that great movement in the Church of England, the preaching on Sabbath-evenings in Exeter Hall, as a sign of rustling, a kind of "a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." My brethren, I could pity the man that would be for one moment envious, though a thousand such places should be full to the doors; I could cry out to God for mercy on the man, who could be so great a sinner against humanity and against the souls of men, as to wish that it should not prosper. With all my heart I pray that God may bless it, and I exhort you just now, as there appears to be a move in the right direction, now that some of the ministers are more thoroughly roused up than they used to be, now that the ordinance of preaching is more honored, now that there is a spirit of hearing poured out amongst the people, I beseech you now, let your prayers be doubly earnest. Do as David was commanded to do—rise up and bestir yourself, not in a spirit of envy, not in a spirit of strife; do not bestir yourself, lest the Church of England shall beat Dissenters. No, brethren, let us each bestir ourselves that we may beat the devil. Let us each be earnest, and let us each when we see a movement in any section of the church, hold up the hands of faithful men, and pray to God that if they are not faithful men they may be made right, but that as far as they are right they

may have a blessing. I think the church of Christ has lived to a glorious period. I really think the day to which we have lived now, is a day that ought to gladden the eyes of many of God's people. So far from being now, as I was a little time ago, in a gloomy frame about the worshippers of the church, I seem to think I have lived now to a happy era. Even the holy Whitfield himself never stirred up such a revival of religion as God has been pleased to give now, not by his preaching did he stir up a host of bishops and clergymen to come forth and preach to the poor. God has been pleased of late to wake up the churches far and near. I hear the noise amongst the mulberry trees. Everywhere I hear of the doctrine of grace being made more prominent, and the preaching of the gospel becoming more earnest, more energetic, and more full of the Spirit. We have seen in our midst some called out of our church, whom God has blessed in the preaching of the Word. There is in many places, and I allude especially to the Church of England just now, "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." Now, my brethren, is the time for us to bestir ourselves. Oh let us cry to God more earnestly; let our prayer-meetings be filled with men who come full of vehement petitions, let our private altars be more constantly kept burning, causing the smoke of prayer to ascend, and let our closets continually be occupied by earnest intercession. Bestir thyself: there is a "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees."

That is concerning the church at large; the same truth holds good of *any particular congregation*. One Sabbath-day the minister preached with great unction; God clothed him with power, he seemed like John the Baptist in the wilderness, crying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He spake with all the earnestness of a man who was about to die; he so spake that the people trembled, a visible thrill passed through the audience. Every eye was fixed, and the tears seemed to bedew every cheek. Men and women rose up from the sermon, saying, "Surely, God was in this place, and we have felt his presence." What ought a Christian man to say, as he retires from the house of God? He should say, "I have heard this day the sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees." I saw the people earnest; I marked the minister speaking mightily, God having touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar. I saw the tear in every eye; I saw the deep, wrapt attention, of many who were careless. There were some young people there that looked as if they had been impressed, their countenances seemed to show that there was a work doing. Now, what should I do? The first thing I will do is, I will bestir myself. But how shall I do it? Why, I will go home this day, and I will wrestle in prayer more earnestly than I have been wont to do that God will bless the minister, and multiply the church. Well, what next? Where do I sit? Was there a young woman in my pew that seemed impressed? When I go this evening I will look out for her; I have heard the "sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees," and I will bestir myself; and if I see her there, I will speak a word to her, or, what is more, if I hear another sermon like it, and I see any who seem to be impressed, I will try to find them out; for I know that two words from a private person are often better than fifty from a minister. So that if I have

seen a young man impressed, I will touch him on his elbow and say, "You seemed as if you enjoyed this sermon." "Yes, I liked it very well." "And do you like spiritual things?" Who can tell? I may be made the means of his conversion. At all events, I shall have this sweet consolation to go to bed with, that I heard the "sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees," and as soon as I heard it I bestirred myself that I might serve my God, and be the means of winning souls from hell. But, alas! my brethren, much of the seed we sow seems to be lost for want of watering. Many an impressive sermon seems to lose much of its force, because it is not followed up as it should be. God's purposes, I know, are answered, his Word does not return unto him void; still, I think we might sometimes ask ourselves, have we not been too dilatory, too neglectful in not availing ourselves of favorable times and seasons, when the power of the Spirit has been in our midst, and when we should have looked upon it as the signal for more strenuously exerting ourselves in the service of our Master.

The same I might say of any time of general sickness, or any time of plague or cholera, or sudden death. There are times when the cholera is raging through our streets the people are all trembling, they are afraid to die; mark, that is the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." It is the business of you and I to bestir ourselves, when people are by any means led to serious thought, when God is walking through the land, and smiting down first one and then another, and the minds of the people are all on tiptoe concerning what the end shall be; when there has been some alarming fire, when a sudden death has taken place, in the street, or in the court, or in a house, it is the Christian's business to seize upon the time, and to improve it for his Master. "Now," said the Puritans, during the great plague of London, when the hireling parish priests had fled from their churches—"now is our time to preach." And all through that terrible time, when the carts, filled with the dead, went through the streets overgrown with grass, these strong-minded Puritans occupied the pulpits, and boldly preached the word of God. Brethren, that is what we should do whenever we see a time more favorable than another for telling sinners of the wrath to come. Let us seize it, just as the merchant looks out for every turn of the market, for every rise and every fall; just as the farmer looks out for a good season for sowing or planting or mowing. Let us look out for the best times for seeking to do good. Let us plough deep while sluggards sleep, and let us labor as much as possible in the best season, to make hay while the sun is shining, and serve our God when we hear the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees."

And now permit me to go back to a thought I have given you. Keep the same idea in view in regard to *every individual* you meet with. If you have a drunken neighbor; it is very seldom you can ever say a word to him. His wife is ill; she is sick and dying, poor fellow, he is sober this time. He seems to be a bit impressed; he is anxious about his wife, and anxious about himself. Now is your time; now for the good word; put it in well, now is your opportunity. There is a great swearer, but he seems by some terrible providence or other to become a little abashed, and he is not so profane as he used to be. You should do as the ancient

slingers did. If they saw a warrior lift his helmet, in they would put the stone, before he could get the helmet down again. So if you see a man a little impressed, and he is open to conviction, do what you can, as God gives you opportunity; and if any of your acquaintance have been in the house of God, if you have induced them to go there, and you think there is some little good doing but you do not know, take care of that little, it may be God hath used us as a fostermother to bring up his child, so that this little one may be brought up in the faith, and this newly converted soul may be strengthened and edified. But I'll tell you, many of you Christians do a deal of mischief, by what you say when going home. A man once said that when he was a lad he heard a certain sermon from a minister, and felt deeply impressed under it. Tears stole down his cheeks, and he thought within him—self, "I will go home to pray." On the road home he fell into the company of two members of the church. One of them began saying, "Well, how did you enjoy the sermon? The other said, "I do not think he was quite sound on such a point." "Well," said the other, "I thought he was rather off his guard," or something of that sort; and one pulled one part of the minister's sermon to pieces, and another the other, until, said the young man, before I had gone many yards with them, I had forgotten all about it; and all the good I thought I had received seemed swept away by these two men, who seemed afraid lest I should get any hope, for they were just pulling that sermon to pieces that would have brought me on my knees. How often have we done the same! People will say, "What did you think of that sermon?" I gently tell them nothing at all, and if there is any fault in it—and very likely there is, it is better not to speak of it, for some may get good from it. I do believe that many a sermon that seems nothing but perfect nonsense from beginning to end may be the means of salvation. You and I may have more knowledge of the Scriptures, we may be more instructed and enlightened: we may say, "Dear me, I do not know how people can hear that." You may think people are not able to hear it, but they are saved; that is all you have to look after. A Primitive minister has sometimes quite puzzled you: you have said, "I dare say the good man understands himself, but I do not understand him." And yet he has got all those people with their attention fixed; and you have seen souls brought to God under the sermon, and therefore you must not say anything about it. You are obliged to say, "Well, it was not the sermon for me." Never mind that, it was the sermon for some one else. It is the best way for you not to hear that man again, but let him go on; he will get some people to do good to, I dare say.

I just throw this in, in an interjaculatory way. If you have got hold of people's ears, or a bit of their ear; if you have got them to say, "I think I will come again," do not put in any word that may keep them away; but bestir yourselves, to be the means of saving souls instrumentally, when you hear these signals from on high.

And I think my brethren, I must expressly make an appeal to you in regard to *your own children*. There are certain times in the history of my own beloved children, when they seem more impressible than at other seasons; I beseech you never lose the opportunity. Salvation

is of God, from first to last; but yet it is your business to use all the means, just as if you could save them. Now there are times when your son, who is generally very gay and wild, comes home from chapel and there is a sort of solemnity about him you do not often see. When you see that, get a word with him. Sometimes your little daughter comes home; she has heard something she understands, something that seems to have struck her thoughts. Do not laugh at her, do not despise that little beginning. Who can tell? It may be the "sound in the tops of the mulberry trees." Your son, a boy of fourteen or fifteen, is often coming home apparently deeply interested, and sometimes you have thought, "Well, I do not know, the boy seems as if he listened rather more than others do. I think there must be a good work in him." Do not, by any harshness of yours, put a rough hand on that tender plant; do not say to him, for instance, if he commits a little fault, "I thought there was some good thing in you, but there is no piety in you at all, or else you would not have done it." Do not say that, that is a damper at once. Remember, if he be a child of God he has his faults as well as any other boy. Therefore do not be too harsh or severe with him, but if you find the slightest good say, There is the "sound in the tops of the mulberry trees." There may be ever such a faint rustling, never mind, that is my opportunity; now will I be more earnest about my child's salvation, and now will I seek to teach him, if I can, more fully the way of God; I will try to get him alone and talk to him. The tender plant, if it be of God, it is sure to grow; but let me take care to be the instrument of fostering it, and let me take my boy aside, and say to him, "Well, my son, have you learnt something of the evil of sin?" And if he says yes, and I find he has a little hope and faith, though it may be rather a superficial work let me not despise it, but let me remember, I was once grace in the blade, and though grace in the ear now, I would never have been grace in the ear if I had not been grace in the blade. I must not despise the blades, because they are not ears; I must not kill the lambs, because they are not sheep; for where would my sheep come from, if I killed all the lambs? I must not despise the weakest of the saints, for where should I get the advanced saints from, if I put weak ones out of the covenant, and tell them they are not the children of God? No, I will watch for the least indication, the least sign of any good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, and I will pray God that these signs may not be delusive, not like the smoke that is driven away, nor like the early cloud and the morning dew, but the abiding signs of grace begun, which shall be afterwards grace complete.

And lastly, not to detain you longer Christian, in regard to *yourself* there is a great truth here. There are times, you know, "when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." You have a peculiar power in prayer; the Spirit of God gives you joy and gladness; the Scripture is open to you; the promises are applied; you walk in the light of God's countenance, and his candle shines about your head; you have peculiar freedom and liberty in devotion; perhaps you have got less to attend to in the world and more closeness of communion with Christ than you used to have. Now is the time; now, when you hear the

“sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” Now is the time to bestir yourselves; now is the time to get rid of any evil habit that still remains now is the season in which God the Spirit is with you. But spread your sail; remember what you sometimes sing—

“I can only spread the sail;

Thou Lord must breathe the auspicious gale.”

Be sure you have the sail up. Do not miss the gale, for want of preparation for it. Seek help of God, that you may be more earnest in duty, when made more strong in faith; that you may be more constant in prayer, when you have more liberty at the throne; that you may be more holy in your conversation, whilst you live more closely with Christ.

And oh, with regard to some here, who to-night, or this morning, or at any other time, have been led to think, “Oh, that I might be saved!” If you have any thought about it, any serious impression, I pray that God the Holy Spirit may enable you to look upon the impression that is made upon you as the “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees;” that you may be led to bestir yourselves, and seek God more earnestly; if God the Spirit has convinced you in any degree, if he has impressed you, if he has made you tremble, if he has sent you home to pray, now, I beseech you, be in earnest about your own soul; and if God has awakened you so far, look upon that as a token of his grace, and say, “now or never.” It may be that this big wave will help you over the great bar that is before the harbour’s mouth. This may be the tide, which taken at the flood, leads on to heaven. Oh, that God might help you to take it at the flood, that you might be carried safely over your convictions and your troubles, and landed safely in the blessed haven of faith—that haven which is protected by the atonement of Christ, and by the bar of everlasting love. God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

Five Fears

A Sermon

(No. 148)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 23, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.”—[Ecclesiastes 8:12](#).

I HAVE heard it sometimes said by wicked men, when they would arraign the justice of the Most High, that it is unjust that God should condemn men for the use of the powers which he himself has given them. This most subtle evil has often grieved the hearts of those who are weak and ignorant, and have not seen its untruthfulness—for to speak plainly of it, it is a gross lie. God does not condemn men for the use of the powers he has given them; he condemns them for the misuse of those powers; not for employing them, but for employing them as they ought not to employ them; not for thinking, not for speaking, not for doing, but for thinking, speaking, and doing, contrary to his law God damneth no man for the use of the powers which he hath given him, let that be again repeated—but he doth condemn them for the abuse of those powers, and for their impudence in daring to turn those powers, which he hath given them, for his honor, against his service, and against his throne Now, my friends, there is no power which God hath given us, which may not be employed for God. I believe that David uttered a great truth, as well as a great exhortation to himself, when he said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” There is nothing in man that God has not there, which may not be employed in God’s service. Some may ask me whether anger can be brought in. I answer, yes. A good man may serve God by being angry against sin; and to be angry against sin is a high and holy thing. You may ask me, perhaps, whether ridicule can be employed. I answer, yes. I believe we may even rightly employ it in the preaching of God’s word. I know this, I always intend to use it; and if by a laugh I can make men see the folly of an error better than in any other way, they shall laugh, and laugh here, too; for ridicule is to be used in God’s service; and every power that God hath implanted in man—I will make no exception,—may be used for God’s service, and for God’s honor. What man hath gotten for himself by the fall, cannot be employed to serve God with, we cannot bring before God Adam’s robbery, to be a sacrifice to the Almighty, nor can our own carnal and sinful passions honor the Most High, but there are natural powers which God hath conferred, and none of these are in themselves sinful. I would have them, therefore, employed for the Master. Yea, even those powers with which it seems impossible to worship, such as the powers of assimilation, eating, and drinking, may be brought to honor God; for what says the Apostle?—“whether ye eat or drink, or

whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Jesus Christ.”

Now, you will notice that fear may be yoked into the service of God. True fear, not fearing, but believing, saves the soul; not doubt, but confidence, is the strength and the deliverance of the Christian. Still, fear, as being one of those powers which God hath given us, is not in itself sinful. Fear may be used for the most sinful purposes; at the same time it may be so ennobled by grace, and so used for the service of God, that it may become the very grandest part of man. In fact, Scripture has honored fear, for the whole of piety is comprehended in these words, “Fear God;” “the fear of the Lord;” “them that fear Him.” These phrases are employed to express true piety, and the men who possess it. Fear, I have said, may ruin the soul, alas! it has ruined multitudes. O Fear, thou art the rock upon which many a ship hath been wrecked. Many a soul hath suffered spiritual destruction through thee, but then it hath been not the fear of God, but the fear of man. Many have rushed against the thick bosses of the Almighty’s buckler, and defied God, in order to escape the wrath of feeble man. Many through fear of worldly loss have brought great guilt into their consciences; some through fear of ridicule and laughter have not had the boldness to follow the right, and so have gone astray and been ruined. Yea, and where fear doth not work utter destruction it is capable of doing much damage to the spirit. Fear hath paralysed the arm of the most gigantic Christian, stopped him in his race, and impeded him in his labors. Faith can do anything, but fear, sinful fear, can do just nothing at all, but even prevent faith from performing its labors. Fear hath made the Christian to sorrow, both by night and day, a cankering fear lest his wants should not be provided for, and his necessities supplied, has driven the Christian to unworthy thoughts; and distrustful, doubting fear hath made him dishonor God, and prevented his sucking the honey out of the promises. Fear hath kept many a child of God from doing his duty, from making a bold profession; hath brought bondage into his spirit. Fear misused, thou art the Christian’s greatest curse, and thou art the sinner’s ruin. Thou art a sly serpent, creeping amongst the thorns of sin, and when thou art allowed to twist thyself around manhood, thou dost crush it in thy folds, and poison it with thy venom. Nothing can be worse than this sinful fear; it hath slaughtered its myriads and sent thousands to hell. But yet it may seem a paradox; fear, when rightly employed, is the very brightest state of Christianity, and is used to express all piety, comprehended in one emotion. “The fear of God” is the constant description which the Scripture gives of true religion.

And now, beloved, I shall want you this morning to have some little patience with me whilst I try to go after certain fearing souls whose fear is of the right kind, even a fear which gendereth salvation, but who through it are now suffering some degree of torment, and are wishing to be delivered from it. An old Puritan says, “Jesus Christ would shake hands with a man that had the palsy.” I must try and do the same this morning. Some of you have the palsy of fear. I want to come after you and say unto you, “Fear not;” to bid you to be of good

cheer, because God would comfort you. There are five different kinds of fear, that persons are laboring under which I would now endeavor to address.

I. There is, first, THE FEAR CAUSED BY AN AWAKENING CONSCIENCE. This is the lowest grade of godly fear; here all true piety takes its rise. By nature, the sinner does not dread the wrath of God; he thinks sin a little thing; he looks upon its pleasures, and forgets its penalty, he dares the Almighty to the war, and lifts his puny arm against the Eternal. No sooner, however, is he awakened by God's Spirit, than fear takes possession of his heart, the arrows of the Almighty drink up his spirit, the thunders of the law roll in his ears; he feels his life to be uncertain, and his body frail, He dreads death, because he knows that death would be to him the prelude of destruction; he dreads life, for life itself is intolerable, when the wrath of God is poured out into his soul. Many of you who are now before me have passed through that dreadful ordeal of suffering under a sense of the wrath of God. We, my brethren, shall never forget, to our dying day, that hour of desperate grief when first we discovered our lost estate. By the preaching of the Word, by the reading of the Scriptures, by prayer, or by some Providence, we were led to look within; we discovered the evil of our hearts, and we heard how terribly God would punish the transgressor. Do you not remember how we started from our beds in the morning, having slept uneasily, and bowed our knees in prayer, and prayed until the hot sweat ran down our brow; but rose without a hope that we had been heard? Do you not recollect how, in our business, we were sometimes so absent in mind, that those who were round about us thought that we must have been bereaved of our wits? Do you not well recollect how the best dainties of our meals seemed to have the bitterness of wormwood in them, and the sweetest draughts were mingled with gall; how all day lone we sorrowed, and went to our bed at night with another prayer, still as full of agony and still as hopeless; and by night we could not sleep, but dreamed of the wrath to come, saw dreams more horrible than we had dreamed before; each night and day the wrath of God seemed to increase, and our pangs and agonies became more terrible? Oh, we shall never forget it; those of us who have passed through the same will never let that era be forgotten, for the time of its beginning was the time of our conversion, and the time of its end was the time of our salvation. Have I any here who are in this same state this morning? I am coming after you, and in coming after you I proclaim the words of my text, "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." Sinner, it shall be well with thee if thou art now made to fear the wrath of God on account of thy sin; if God the Spirit hath poured forth the vials of Almighty wrath into thy soul, so that thou art cast down and sore vexed. Think not thou shalt be destroyed; it shall be well with thee. Let me comfort thee now, whilst thou art suffering these things, remember that what thou sufferest is that which all God's people have had to suffer in a measure. Many poor hearts come to me when I am sitting to see the anxious ones, and at other times, and they tell me they are in such deep distress; surely never anyone felt as they feel. And when I begin

to unfold to them the experience of all saints, and tell them how it is a well-trodden path which almost every traveler to heaven has had to tread, they stand astonished, and think it cannot be so. I tell thee sinner, that thy deepest woes have been felt by some one, even more keenly than thou feelest them now. Thou sayest, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing." Why, man, there have been some that have sunk far deeper than thou hast sunk. Thou art up to thy ancles; I have known some to have been up to the loins, and there have been some that have been covered over their very heads so that they could say, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." Your distresses are very painful, but they are not singular, others have had to endure the same. Be comforted, it is not a desert island; others have been there too; and if they have passed through this, and won the crown, thou shalt pass through it, and inherit yet the glory of the believer on the breast of Christ.

But I will tell thee something else to comfort thee; I will put this question to thee—Wouldst thou wish to go back and become what thou once wast? Thy sins are now so painful, that thou canst scarce eat, or drink, or sleep. There was a time when thy sins never haunted thee, when thou couldst drink and may with Satan and with sin as merrily as anyone. Come, wouldst thou like to be as thou wast then? "No," I hear thee say, "no; my Master, my God, grieve me more, if so it pleaseth thee, but do not let me be hardened any more." Ask the poor strickened conscience, in the first agonies and throes of his grief, whether he would like to be a hardened sinner? "No," he says; and when he hears the blasphemer swear against God, the tear is in his eye; he says, "Lord, I thank thee for my miseries, if they deliver me from hardness of heart. I can extol thee for my agonies, if they save me from such dire presumption, such rebellion against thee." Well, then, be of good cheer, your condition, you see, is not the worst of all; there is a worse state yet. Oh, it thou hast come so far, hope thou in Christ, thou shalt come further yet. But the great consolation is this, Jesus Christ died for thee. If God the Holy Ghost hath shown thee that thou art dead in sin, and if he hath revealed to thee the desperate character of thine iniquity, and broken thee in pieces with penitence on account of thy guilt—hear me, I speak not now at hap-hazard, I speak with God's authority—Jesus Christ died for thee; yes, for thee, thou vilest of the vile. I am no general redemptionist, I believe Jesus Christ died for as many as will be saved; I do not believe he died in vain for any man alive. I have always believed that Christ was punished instead of men. Now, if he were punished in the stead of all men, I could see no justice in God punishing men again after having punished Christ for them. I hold and believe—and, I think, on Scriptural authority, that Jesus Christ died for all those who believe or will believe; and he was punished in the stead of all those who feel their need of a Saviour, and lay hold on him. The rest reject him, despise him, sin against God, and are punished for their sine. But those who are redeemed, having been blood-bought, shall not be lost. Christ's blood is too precious to have been shed for men who are damned. It is too awful a thing to think of the Saviour standing in a sinner's stead, and then that sinner after all having to bear his own

iniquities; I can never indulge a thought which appears to be so unrighteous to God, and so unsafe to men. All that the Saviour bought he shall have, all that his heavenly Father hath given him, he says, shall come unto him. Now here is something solid for thee, poor soul. I ask again, dost thou know and feel thyself to be lost and ruined? Then the Saviour bought thee, and will have thee; then he was punished for thee and thou never wilt be punished again; then he hung upon the cross for thee that thou mightest not perish. For thee there is no hell, so far as thou art concerned. The eternal lake is quenched; the dungeons of hell are broken open, their bars are cut in sunder. Thou art free; no damnation can ever seize thee, no devils can ever drag thee to the pit. Thou art redeemed, and thou art saved. "What!" sayest thou, "I redeemed! Why, sir, I am full of sin." It is the very reason why thou art redeemed. "But I feel myself to be the guiltiest of all the human race." Yes, and that is just the evidence that Christ died for thee. He says himself, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If you have got abundance of good works, and think you can go to heaven by them, you will perish; but if you know your guilt, and confess it—it is not my affirmation, but the affirmation of the Scriptures—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom," says the Apostle, "I am chief." Lay hold on that, poor soul: and then I repeat to thee the text, "Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." It shall be well with thee yet, and black though thou art, thou shalt one day sing among the blood-washed ones in glory everlasting. That is the first stage of fearing God; we shall now proceed to another.

II. There are many who have believed, and are truly converted, who have a fear which I may call THE FEAR OF ANXIETY. They are afraid that they are not converted. They are converted, there is no doubt of it. Sometimes they know they are so themselves, but, for the most part, they are afraid. There are some people in the world who have a preponderance of fear in their characters it seems as if their mind, from its peculiar constitution, had a greater aptitude for the state of fear than for any other state. Why, even in temporal matters they are always fearing; and, when these poor souls get converted, they are always afraid that they are not so. First, they will tell you they are afraid they never repented enough; the work in their hearts, they say, was not deep; it was just superficial surface-ploughing, and never entered into their souls. Then they are quite sure they never came to Christ aright, they think they came the wrong way. How that can be no one knows, for they could not come at all except the Father drew them; and the Father did not draw them the wrong way, Still they hold that they did not come aright; then if that idea is knocked on the head, they say they do not believe aright; but when that is got rid of, they say, if they were converted they would not be the subject of so much sin. They say they can trust Christ, but they are afraid they do not trust him aright; and they always do, what you may, come back to the old condition; they are always afraid. And now, what shall I say to these good souls? Why, I will

say this, "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." Not only those who believe, but those who fear, have got a promise, I would to God that they had more faith; I would that they could lay hold on the Saviour, and had more assurance, and even attain unto a perfect confidence; but if they cannot shall I utter a word that would hurt them? God forbid; "Surely it shall be with even with them that fear God, with them that fear before him." There are some of these poor creatures who are the holiest and most heavenly minded people in all the world. I have seen men who, with poor, desponding spirits, have exhibited the most lovely graces. There has not been the blushing healthful beauty of the rose; but the lily hath its beauties, sickly though it seemeth, and these, though they be faint and weak, have eminently the graces of humility and meekness, of patience and endurance, and they practice more of meditation, more of self examination, more of repentance more of prayer, than any race of Christians alive. God forbid that I should vex their spirits: there are some of God's best children who always grow in the shade of fear, and can scarcely attain to so much as to say, "I know whom I have believed." Darkness suits them best, their eyes are weak, and much sunlight seems to blind them, they love the shadows; and though they thought they could sing, "I know my Saviour, I love him, and he loves me;" they go back again, and begin to groan in themselves, "Do I love the Lord; indeed, if it be so, why am I thus?"

Now, I am about to utter a great paradox—I believe that some of these poor fearing people have got the greatest faith of anybody in the world; I have sometimes thought that great fear, great anxiety, must have great faith with it to keep the soul alive at all. See that man drowning, there—there is another in the water too, I see. He in the distance thinks he can swim: a plank is thrown to him; he believes himself to be in no danger of sinking. Well he clutches the plank very leisurely, and does not seem to grasp it firmly. But this poor creature here, he knows he cannot swim, he feels that he must soon sink Now put the means of escape near him, how desperately he clutches it; how he seems as if he would drive his fingers through the plank! He clutches it for life or death, that is his all, for he must perish if he is not saved by that. Now, in this case, he that fears the most believes the most; and I do think it is so sometimes with poor desponding spirits. They have the greatest fear of hell, and the greatest fear of themselves, and the greatest dread that they are not right. Oh, what a faith they must have, when they are enabled to throw themselves on Christ, and when they can but whisper to themselves "I think that he is mine"—"Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear-before him."

But I want to comfort these poor souls a little. I do not think a minister does well in killing the lambs; for where would be the sheep next year if he should do so? But at the same time it is his business to make the lambs grow into sheep if he can. And you who are fearing, I would not say a word to hurt you, but I would say a word to comfort you if I could; I would remind you that you are not fit to judge of yourself. You have been just now examining

yourself, and you came to the conclusion that you really are not a child of God. Now, you will not be offended with me, but I would not give one single farthing for your opinion of yourself. Why, I tell you, you have not any judgment. It is not long ago you were a base, presumptuous sinner, and then you thought yourself all right. I did not believe you then. Well, then you began to reform yourself. You practiced many good works, and thought, surely you were mending your pace to heaven then. Then I knew you were wrong. Now you are becoming a true believer in Christ, but you are very fearful, and you say you are not safe. I know you are; you are not fit to judge. I should not like to see you elevated to the bench; you would scarcely know how to deal with other men, for you would not know how to deal with yourself; and who is he that can deal with himself? We sometimes think ourselves proud, and we are never more humble than when we feel that we are proud. At other times, we think ourselves to be wonderfully humble, and we are never more proud than then. We sometimes say within ourselves, "Now I think I am overcoming my corruptions;" that is just the time when they are about to attack us most severely. At another time we are crying, "Surely I shall be cut off," that is just the period when sin is being routed, because we are hating it the most and crying out the most against it. We are not qualified to fudge ourselves, our poor scales are so out of order, that they will never tell the truth. Now, then, just give up your own judgment, except thus far. Can you say that you "are a poor sinner and nothing at all, and that Jesus Christ is your all in all?" Then be comforted. You have no right to be anxious; you have no reason to be so. You could not say that if you had not been converted. You must have been quickened by grace, or else you would not be anxious at all; and you must have faith, or else you would not be able even to lay hold of Christ so much as to know your own nothingness and his all sufficiency. Poor soul! be comforted.

But shall I tell thee one thing? Dost thou know the greatest of God's people are often in the same condition as thou art now? "No, no," says the fearful soul, "I do not believe that, I believe that when persons are converted they never have any fear," and they look at the minister, and they say, "Oh, but if I could be but like that minister; I know he never has doubts and fears. Oh, if I could be like old deacon So-and-so—such a holy man how he prays! Oh, if I could feel like Mr. So-and-so, who calls to visit me, and talks to me so sweetly. They never doubt." Ah, that is because you do not know. Those whom you think to be the strongest, and are so in public, have their times of the greatest weakness, when they can scarcely know their own names in spiritual things. If one may speak for the rest, those of us who enjoy the greatest portions of assurance have times when we would give all the world to know ourselves to be possessors of grace; when we would be ready to sacrifice our lives if we might but have the shadow of a hope that we were in the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, little one, if the giants go there, what wonder if the dwarfs must? What if God's favourite and chosen ones, what if his valiant men, the body guard of Christ, those men whose swords are on their thighs, and who stand up for the truth and are its champions—if they sometimes

are weak, what wonder if thou shouldst be weak? What if the heirs of salvation and the soldiers of the cross sometimes feel their knees feeble and their hands hang down and their hearts faint, what wonder if thou, who art less than the least of all saints shouldst sometimes be in trouble too? Oh, be of good cheer; fear will never kill anybody. "Doubts and fears," said an old preacher, once, "are like the toothache nothing more painful, but never fatal." They will often grieve us, but they will never kill us, they distress us much but they will never burn the soul. Fears even do good at times. Let me not however, praise them too much. I heard a preacher say, the other day, that fear was a good housekeeper. I said, "So I have heard, but I do not believe it. She never will keep a cupboard full; she is a good doorkeeper; she can keep beggars and thieves away; she is a good housedog to guard us and protect us in the night, and warn us of dangers, lest we fall into them." The fear of anxiety then, is a good fear. Take this promise—"Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him."

III. And now, my brethren, in the next place there is A FEAR WHICH WORKS CAUTION. When we get a little further advanced in the Christian life, our present state is not so much a matter of anxiety as our future state. We believe that we shall never totally fall from grace. We hold it as a cardinal doctrine of our religion that by no means will God ever leave his people or suffer them to perish. But we often think within ourselves, I am afraid lest I should bring dishonor on the cause of Christ; I am afraid lest, in some moment of temptation, I shall be left to go astray; I am afraid lest I should lose that hallowed peace and that delightful joy which it has been my privilege to enjoy, and shall yet go back into the world. God grant I may not prove to be a hypocrite, after all! Now, I have hundreds of persons just now in this place, who are feeling like this, and I will tell you one ill effect of this fear. These persons say, "I dare not join the church, because I am afraid I shall fall." A friend mentions to them that they hold it to be their duty, if they have believed, to make a profession of their faith in baptism. They say, "Well, I believe it to be my duty to partake of the two institutions of our Saviour; I ought to be buried with him in baptism unto death; I ought also, I know, to hold fellowship with him in the Lord's supper, but I dare not join the church; for suppose I should bring dishonor upon the cause, suppose I should disgrace the church, what a sad thing it would be!" That fear is good, in itself. But do you think that you would not bring disgrace on Christ's cause as it is? You are always at the place of worship; you are never away. You were always looked upon as being one of the church, though you have not made a profession. Now, if you were to sin, would it not dishonor the church even now? You know your relatives and friends esteem you to be a Christian. You would scarce dishonor the church more if you were actually to join it; for you really are united with it. If you would be consistent, you must never go to the chapel any more. Just stop away; give up your seat; turn right down irreligious, and then you cannot dishonor the church. Do one or the other, but never think you will be saving Christ's church by dishonoring God, as you really are

doing now. And then I will ask you this question, Where do you think a man is safest—in the paths of obedience, or in the paths of disobedience? Now you know you are disobedient; you are quite sure of that. Do you think you are safer where your wayward will leads you, or where God's Spirit points the way? And remember this, if you cannot trust God to keep you standing, you must have a poor faith indeed. If you cannot just risk that and be united with the church, and hope that Christ will keep you, then I fear you will have some terrible fall. If you do not join the church, you will bring far more disgrace upon it by being outside it, than you would have done if you had been united with it and had been kept. Ah, friends, I believe that union with the Christian church is often a means under God, of preserving men from sin; for then they think there is a bond upon them, and a sacred claim, and many of them are more careful what they do. And I trust there would be the same check upon you.

But now, I daresay that the poor creature who has been uttering this, thinks I am about to condemn her; and the poor man who has been talking so thinks I would cut him off and say he is no child of God. God forbid! My text belongs to him. You are afraid you will fall into sin—"Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." If you should tell me you were not afraid of falling, I would not have you in the church for the world; you would be no Christian. All Christians, when they are in a right state, are afraid of falling into sin. Holy fear is the proper condition of a child of God. Even the most confident will not go into presumption. He that knows his love to the Saviour, and his Saviour's love to him, is yet afraid lest he should dishonor him. If there be a man who has an assurance of such a kind, as to put fear out of the question, so that he is never afraid of sinning, I will tell him he has a satanic assurance, an assurance which came from Satan and not from God for the more assured we are of our own conversion, the more careful we shall be lest we should offend God, and the more fearful lest by word or look, or deed, we should grieve God's Holy Spirit. I love your fear, and love you too for it, you are my brother and sister in Jesus, if you can truly say that you fear lest you should sin. Seek then, my friends, to grow in this fear of caution, obtain more and more of it; and whilst thou dost not distrust the Saviour, learn to distrust thyself more and more every day.

IV. I shall not detain you many more minutes; I have only to notice in the next place the fear which I may call THE FEAR OF JEALOUSY. Strong love will usually promote jealousy. "Love is as strong as death;" then comes the next, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave." We cannot love strongly without feeling some jealousy—I mean, not jealousy against the object of our love; for, "perfect love casteth out fear"—but jealousy against ourselves. "Oh what jealousy," says the Apostle, addressing the Corinthians, "what revenge," did grace work in you when you were first converted. The true believer, when he gets his Saviour in full possession, and in blissful communion, is so jealous lest any rival should intrude in his heart; he is afraid lest his dearest friend should get more of his heart than the Saviour has. He is

afraid of his wealth; he trembles at his health, at his fame, at everything that is dear to him, lest it should engross his heart. Oh, how often does he pray, “My Lord, let me not be of a divided spirit; cast down each idol—self-will, self-righteousness.” And I tell you the more he loves, the more he will fear lest he should provoke his Saviour by bringing a rival into his heart, and setting up an Antichrist in his spirit; so that fear just goes in proportion to love; and the bright love is congenial, and must walk side by side with the deepest jealousy and the profoundest fear. Seek, my brethren to know the meaning of communion, and you must know, then, the meaning of fear; for fear and communion must, to a great degree go together.

V. And now I will conclude by just mentioning that fear which is felt WHEN WE HAVE HAD DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS. Did you never, in the silence of the night, look up and view the stars, feeding, like sheep, on the azure pastures of the sky? Have you never thought of those great worlds, far, far away, divided from us by almost illimitable leagues of space? Did you never, whilst musing on the starry heavens, lose yourself in thoughts of God; and have you never felt, at such a time, that you could say with Jacob, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven.” Have you never seen the craggy hills lift their summits to the skies? Have you never marked the tempests sailing o’er them, and seen the thunder-cloud burst upon the mountain, and heard the heavens shake beneath the tramp of the Most High, and seen the skies all glaring red with fire, when God hath sent his thunder-bolts abroad; and have you not trembled that God was there, and in other and happier seasons have you not in your chamber been so wrapt in devotion, have you not so manifestly known the presence of God that you were filled with trembling? Fear took hold upon you and made all your bones to shake, not because you dreaded God, but because you then saw some of his greatness. It is said of Moses, that when he saw the burning bush he feared to look upon God. God is so great a Being, that the rightly constituted mind must always fear when it approaches into his presence. The Eastern subject, when he came before his king, regarded him as a being so infinitely superior to himself, that even in the vestibule he began to shake, and as he neared the throne he began to totter and his cheek was blanched with fear. Like Esther, he would faint when he came before the king, so glorious was his majesty. And if it be so with earthly monarchs, how fearful must it be to come into the presence chamber of the King of kings, and to feel one’s self near him! Why, I believe that even in heaven we shall have this kind of fear. Certainly the angels have it. They dare not look on God. They veil their faces with their wings, and whilst they cry aloud, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts yet they dare not view him. The very sight of him might destroy them, and they tremble at his presence. Now this kind of fear, if you have ever felt it, if it has been produced in your heart by contemplation of God, is a high and hallowed thing, and to you this promise is addressed—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.”

And now, might I go round again this morning—I cannot do it personally, yet by my voice—to the poor trembling soul who is overcome with sin. Poor man, where art thou? Hath the devil got hold of thee, and have thy sins covered thee up, so that thou canst not see the face of the sun, and behold the light of mercy? Listen to me; you may never hope till you have left off hoping in yourself. You have never any right to believe, till you have nothing to believe in yourself. Until you have lost all, you have no right to take anything. But now, if you have lost all your own good works and righteousness, if you feel that there is no reason why you should be saved, that is the very reason why you should be. My Master bids me tell the naked to come to his heavenly wardrobe, and take his royal garment for their clothing. He bids me tell the hungry to haste away to his heavenly granaries, and feed upon the old corn of the kingdom to their very full. He bids me tell the thirsty that the river of life is broad and deep, and flows freely to all those who thirst after it. Now, sinner, if thou art sick of sin, and grieved at heart where thou standest, follow me in spirit in these words: “O Lord, I know my guilt, and I confess my misery. If thou dampest me to all eternity, thou wilt be just; but, O Lord, have mercy upon me, according to thy promise, which thou hast made in Christ Jesus, unto those who confess their faults.” If that came from your heart, go out of that door, and sing all the way home, for you are a pardoned sinner. You shall never see death—the second death, the death of the soul. Go home to your chamber! let your heart burst itself in tears of thankfulness. Go, and there prostrate yourself, and bless God that he has enabled you to see that only Jesus can do a helpless sinner good. And then, “go your way; eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart. Let your head lack no oil, and your face no ointment; for God hath accepted you; and you have a right to be happy. Live cheerfully and joyfully all the days of your life, hereafter and for ever.”

Independence of Christianity

A Sermon

(No. 149)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 31, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”—[Zechariah 4:6](#).

GOD’S first and greatest object is his own glory. There was a time, before all time, when there was no day but the Ancient of days, when God dwelt alone in the magnificence of his sublime solitude. Whether he should create, or not create was a question depending upon the answer to another question—Would it be to his honor or not? He determined that he would glorify himself by creating; but, in creating, beyond all doubt, his motive was his glory. And since that time, he hath ever ruled the earth, and even blessed it with the same object in his infinite mind—his own glory and honor. Lesser motive for God to have, were less than divine; it is the highest position to which you or I could attain, to live for God; and the very highest virtue of God is for him to magnify himself in all his greatness as the Infinite and the Eternal. Whatever, then, God permits or does, he doeth with this one motive, his own glory. And even salvation, costly though it was, and infinitely a benefaction to us, had for its first object, and for its grand result, the exaltation of the Being and of the attributes of the Supreme Ruler.

Now, as this is true in the general of the great acts of God, this is equally true in the minutiae of them. It is true that God has a church, that that church has been redeemed and will be preserved for his glory, and it is equally true that everything that is done to the church, in the church, or for the church either with the permission or by the power of God, is for God’s glory, as well as for the church’s weal. You will notice, in reading Scripture, that whenever God has blessed the church, he has secured himself the glory of the blessing, though they have had the profit of it. Sometimes he has been pleased to redeem his people by might but then he has so used the might and power that all the glory hath come to him, and his head alone hath worn the crown. Did he smite Egypt, and lead forth his people, with a strong hand and outstretched arm? The glory was not to the rod of Moses, but to the Almighty power which made the rod so potent. Did he lead his people through the wilderness, and defend them from their enemies? Still, did he, by teaching the people their dependence upon him, preserve to himself all the glory? So that not Moses or Aaron amongst the priests or prophets could share the honor with him. And tell me, if ye will, of slaughtered Anak, and the destruction of the tribes of Canaan; tell me of Israel’s possessing the promised land; tell me of Philistines routed, and laid heaps on heaps; of Midianites made to fall on each

other; tell me of kings and princes who fled apace and fell, until the ground was white, like the snow in Salmon. I will say of everyone of these triumphs, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;" and I will say at the end of every victory, "Crown *him*, crown *him*, for *he* hath done it; and let *his* name be exalted and extolled, world without end." Sometimes, however, God chooseth not to employ the agency of power. If he chooses to save, by might and by power, it is that glory may be unto him; and when he says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," it is still with the same object, and the same desire, that we may be led—

"To give to the King of kings renown,
The Lord of Lords with glory crown,"

God is jealous of his own honor; he will not suffer even his church to be delivered in such a way as to honor men more than God; he will take to himself the throne without a rival he will wear a crown that never head did wear, and sway a scepter that never head hath grasped, for as truly as he is God, the earth shall know that he, and he alone, hath done it, and unto him shall be the glory.

Now, my objects this morning will be to glorify God, by showing to you, who love the Saviour, that the preservation and the triumph of the church are both of them to be accomplished, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God, in order that all the honor might be to God, and none of it to man. I shall divide my text very simply; it divides itself. First, *not by might*; secondly, *nor by power*; thirdly, *but by my Spirit*.

You will ask me whether there is any distinction to be drawn between these two words, "NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER." I answer, yes. The best Hebrew scholars tell us that the "might," in the first place, may be translated, "army." The Septuagint does so translate it. It signifies power *collectedly*—the power of a number of men combined together. The second word, "power," signifies the prowess of a single individual, so that I might paraphrase my text thus—"Not by the combined might of men laboring to assist each other, nor by the separate might of any single hero, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." And now you will see the distinction, which is not without a difference.

To begin then, the preservation and the triumph of the church cannot be accomplished BY MIGHT—that is, not by might collectedly.

First, let us consider that collected might to represent *human armies*. The church, we affirm, can neither be preserved nor can its interests be promoted by human armies. We have all thought otherwise in our time, and have foolishly said when a fresh territory was annexed to our empire, "Ah! what a providence that England has annexed Oude,"—or taken to itself some other territory—"Now a door is opened for the Gospel. A Christian power will necessarily encourage Christianity, and seeing that a Christian power is at the head of the Government, it will be likely that the natives will be induced to search into the authenticity of our revelation, and so great results will follow. Who can tell but that, at the point

of the British bayonet, the Gospel will be carried, and that, by the edge of the true sword of valiant men, Christ's Gospel will be proclaimed?" I have said so myself; and now I know I am a fool for my pains, and that Christ's church hath been also miserably befooled; for this I will assert, and prove too, that the progress of the arms of a Christian nation is not the progress of Christianity, and that the spread of our empire, so far from being advantageous to the Gospel, I will hold, and this day proclaim, hath been hostile to it.

We will just confine our attention for a moment or two to India. I believe that British rule there, has been useful in many ways. I shall not deny the civilizing influence of European society; or that great things have been done for humanity; but I do assert, and can prove it, that there would have been greater probability of the Gospel spreading in India if it had been let alone, than there has been ever since the domination of Great Britain. Ye thought that when Christians, as ye called them, had the land, they would favor religion. Now I will state a fact which ought to go through the length and breadth of the land; it does not rest on hearsay, I was informed of it a little while ago by a clergyman, upon whose memory the fact is vividly impressed. A Sepoy in a certain regiment was converted to God by a missionary. He proposed to be baptized, and become a Christian. Mark, not a Christian after our way and fashion, as a Baptist, or an Independent or a Methodist; but a Christian according to the fashion of the Episcopalian church established in this realm. He was seen by the chaplain, and was received as a Christian. What think you became of that Sepoy? Let the East India Company blush for ever, he was stripped of his regimentals, dismissed the service and sent home, because he had become a Christian! Ah! we dreamed that if they had the power they would help us. Alas! the policy of greed cannot easily be made to assist the Kingdom of Christ.

But I have another string to my bow, I believe that the help of Government would have been far worse than its opposition, I do regret that the Company sometimes discourages missionary enterprise; but I believe that, had they encouraged it, it would have been far worse still, for their encouragement would have been the greatest hindrance we could receive. If I had to-morrow to go to India to preach the Gospel, I should pray to God, if such a thing could be, that he would give me a black face and make me like a Hindoo; for otherwise I should feel that when I preached I should be regarded as one of the lords—one of the oppressors it may sometime be added—and I should not expect my congregation to listen to me as a man speaking to men, a brother to brother, a Christian full of love, but they would hear me, and only cavil at me, because even my white face would give me some appearance of superiority. Why in England, our missionaries and our clergymen have assumed a kind of superiority and dignity over the people; they have called themselves clergy, and the people laity; and the result has been that they have weakened their influence. I have thought it right to come amongst my fellow men, and be a man amongst men, just one of themselves, their equal and their friend; and they have rallied around me, and not refused to love me. And I

should not expect to be successful in preaching the gospel, unless I might stand and feel that I am a brother, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. If I cannot stand before them thus, I cannot get at their hearts. Send me, then, to India as one of the dominant ruling race, and you give me a work I cannot accomplish when you tell me to evangelise its inhabitants. In that day when John Williams fell in Erromanga, ye wept, but it was a more hopeful day for Erromanga than the day when our missionaries in India first landed there. I had rather go to preach to the greatest savages that live, than I would go to preach in the place that is under British rule. Not for the fault of Britain, but simply because I, as a Briton, would be looked upon as one of the superiors, one of the lords, and that would take away much of my power to do good. Now, will you just cast your eye upon the wide world? Did you ever hear of a nation under British rule being converted to God? Mr. Moffat and our great friend Dr. Livingstone have been laboring in Africa with great success, and many have been converted. Did you ever hear of Kaffir tribes protected by England, ever being converted? It is only a people that have been left to themselves, and preached to by men as men, that have been brought to God. For my part, I conceive, that when an enterprise begins in martyrdom, it is none the less likely to succeed, but when conquerors begin to preach the gospel to those they have conquered, it will not succeed, God will teach us that it is not by might All swords that have ever flashed from scabbards have not aided Christ a single grain. Mahommedans' religion might be sustained by scimitars, but Christians' religion must be sustained by love. The great crime of war can never promote the religion of peace. The battle, and the garment rolled in blood, are not a fitting prelude to "peace on earth, goodwill to men." And I do firmly hold, that the slaughter of men, that bayonets, and swords, and guns, have never yet been, and never can be, promoters of the gospel. The gospel will proceed without them, but never through them. "Not by might." Now don't be fooled again, if you hear of the English conquering in China, don't go down on your knees and thank God for it, and say it's such a heavenly thing for the spread of the gospel—it just is not. Experience teaches you that, and if you look upon the map you will find I have stated only the truth, that where our arms have been victorious, the gospel has been hindered rather than not; so that where South Sea Islanders have bowed their knees and cast their idols to the bats, British Hindoos have kept their idols, and where Bechuanas and Bushmen have turned unto the Lord, British Affairs have not been converted, not perhaps because they were British, but because the very fact of the missionary being a Briton, put him above them, and weakened their influence. Hush thy trump, O war; put away thy gaudy trappings and thy bloodstained drapery, if thou thinkest that the cannon with the cross upon it is really sanctified, and if thou imaginest that thy banner hath become holy, thou dreamest of a lie. God wanteth not thee to help his cause. "It is not by armies, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

Now, understanding this word "might," in another sense, to signify *great corporations*, or, as we say, denominations of men. Now-a-days, people get a queer notion in their head,

and they form what they call a denomination. It is all wrong; there never ought to have been any denominations at all, for according to Scripture, every church is independent of every other. There ought to have been as many separate churches as there were separate opinions; but denominations, which are the gathering up of those churches, I take it, ought not to have existed at all. They may do some good, but they do a world of mischief. Now, when first denomination starts it is very much opposed. Take, for instance, Methodism; how earnest were its first preachers, how indefatigably did they toil, and how incessantly were they persecuted; yet what a harvest of souls God gave to them! What a great blessing was showered from the cloud that first started at Oxford, with those few young men preaching the everlasting gospel! Methodism goes on till it grows to be a most respectable kind of society, its ramifications extend all over England and it has societies in every country—and now—God forbid I should say anything against Methodism; let those who like it believe it; I do not like it—but I do say now, when they have come to the greatest is the time when they are doing the least. They will confess that the ancient power of Methodism has to a great degree failed. That power which once seemed to turn the world upside down, and set the whole of the churches on fire with a divine light and life, is to a great degree quenched. Wars and rumors of wars are in their camp; till, what with new connections and old connections, reformed and confessional, and an infinite quantity of names, one does not know into how many fraternities they intend to divide themselves. The fact is, that just when the corporation began to be the greatest, God said, “Now then, you have done your work, to a great degree, it shall not be by you any longer; not by might, not by your allied forces. You have said our efforts will cover the earth with the gospel.” “Now,” says God, “I will diminish you by thousands, I will take off your roll year by year, as many as would make another denomination strong; and though you shall still exist, you shall have to weep and repent with bitterness, because of your departed zeal.” It is just the same with every other denomination. When we Baptists were reckoned to be the poorest lot in the world, and everybody sneered at us, we did far more good than we do now. There was far more pure doctrine, and far better preaching than there is at the present time. But we began to be respectable—and just as we began to be respectable we began to lose our power. Every fresh Gothic Baptist chapel was a diminution of simplicity; and every fresh place where the minister become intellectual, as it was called, was just a loss of evangelical might, till now, as a denomination, we are just as low as any other: and we need some of our old leaders again, just to preach the word with demonstration and with power, and to overthrow all those grand conventionalisms which have tried to make the Baptist denomination respectable. I pray to God I may never be called to preach to a much applauded congregation; it would be a sad and evil day. To be despised, to be spit upon, to be caricatured, and to be jeered, is the highest honor that a Christian minister can have; and to be pampered, flattered, and applauded by men, is a poor, base thing, that is not worth having. If any come here and say “They are not a respectable sort;”

we reply, “we labor to preach to the poor.” But mark this, whenever a great denomination begins to get too great, God will cut away its horns, and take away its glory, till the world shall say, “It is not by might nor by power.”

And now, I shall give one more application of the word “might.” It is so with one particular church, just as I have been observing. I tremble for the church of which I am the pastor. I never trembled for it when we were few, when we were earnest in prayer, and devout in supplication, when it was a thing of contempt to go into “that miserable Baptist Chapel in Park Street,” when we were despised and maligned and slandered. I never trembled for them then; God was blessing the ministry, souls were saved, and we walked together in the fear of the Lord and in love. But I tremble for it now, now that God hath enlarged our borders, and given us to count our members not by tens but by hundreds, now that we can say we are the largest Baptist church in England. I do tremble now, because now is just the time when we shall begin to say, “We are a great people,” “We shall do very much,” “We are a great agency,” “The world will look upon us, and we will do a great deal.” If we ever say that, God will say, “Cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm,” and he will hide the light of his countenance from us, so that our mountain that standeth firm shall begin to shake. O churches!—all of ye here that are representatives of churches, carry ye the tidings. O churches! take heed lest ye trust in yourselves; take heed lest ye say, “We are a respectable body,” “We are a mighty number,” “We are a potent people;” take heed lest ye begin to glory in your own strength; for when that is done, “Ichabod” shall be written on your walls and your glory shall depart from you. Remember, that he who was with us when we were but few, must be with us now we are many, or else we must fail; and he who strengthened us when we were but as “little in Israel,” must be with us, now that we are like “the thousands of Manasseh,” or else it is all over with us and our day is past. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord.”

II. NOR BY POWER, that is, individual strength. You know, beloved, that after all, the greatest works that have been done have been done by the ones. The hundreds do not often do much, the companies never do, it is the units, just the single individuals, that after all are the power and the might. Take any parish in England where there is a well-regulated society for doing good—it is some young woman or some young man who is the very life of it. Take any church, there are multitudes in it, but it is some two or three that do the work. Look on the Reformation, there might be many reformers, but there was but one Luther, there might be many teachers, but there was but one Calvin. Look ye upon the preachers of the last age, the mighty preachers who stirred up the churches; there were many coadjutors with them, but after all, it was not Whitfield’s friends, nor Wesley’s friends, but the men themselves that did it. Individual effort is, after all, the grand thing. A man alone can do more than a man with fifty men at his heels to fetter him. Committees are very seldom of much use, and bodies and societies sometimes are loss of strength instead of a gain. It is said, that if Noah’s

Ark had had to be built by a company, they would not have laid the keel yet; and it is perhaps true. There is scarcely anything done by a body, it almost always fails; because what is many men's business is just nobody's business at all. Just the same with religion, the grand things must be done by the ones, the great works of God must be accomplished by single men. Look back through old history. Who delivered Israel from the Philistines? It was a solitary Samson. Who was it gathered the people together to rout the Midianites? It was one Gideon, who cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Who was he that smote the enemy? It was one Shamgar, with his ox goad, or it was an Elon, who with his dagger, put an end to his country's tyrant. Separate men—Davids with their slings and stones, have done more than armies could accomplish. "But," says God, "it is not even by individual might, the gospel is to be spread." Take individual might in different senses; sometimes we may say, of this kind, it represents learning. We discover here and there certain great and mighty men in learning, that can take an infidel, strap him on to the dissecting board, and just anatomise him in a minute, they are great doctors of divinity, they have achieved the highest titles that can be given them at the universities; they have read the Scriptures thoroughly, they are mighty theologians, they could dispute with John Owen, and could entirely take the wind out of the sails of Calvin, they know a great deal, a very great deal; they can write most excellent reviews, and are much gifted in philosophical disquisitions. But did you ever hear, in the course of all your life, of any one of these being blessed by God to lead any great religious movement? Such a thing may have been, but I have forgotten all about it; there may have been such an occurrence, but I do not remember it. This I am sure of; that the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ had taken no degree, except it was a good degree of being excellent fishermen, this I am certain, that all through the ages God has not often used men of any very great intellectual compass, they have not seemed to be men of profound learning; they have generally been men of determined will and strong principle, but not often of any very high intellectual attainments. Do I, therefore, rail at learning? O! no; God forbid, the more of that the better. Let men be as wise as they can be, and as learned as they can be, but still the fact remaineth, and there is no one that can dispute it—that God hath often taken the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, in order that men may see "It is not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

I have the pleasure and happiness of being acquainted with a large number of the most eminent ministers in England; I have walked and talked with them, and spoken to them about the things of the kingdom, and with great pleasure, and if they were present they would not think me severe in what I am about to say. Many of those at whose feet we have been prepared to sit as little children to hear their wisdom, confessed as ministers, that when they reviewed up their life, they felt that it has been unprofitable. They have been learned, but they would say with Owen, "I would give up all my talents to preach like Bunyan the tinker." They have wished that they could have believed something else besides having at-

tained a name for profound learning and research. My brethren, it is not their fault, they have labored well and earnestly, I find no fault whatever with them: it is God's supremacy that stamps this upon them and makes them feel the force of it—that it must not be by power, and their very intellectual prowess, puts them out of the way—so that they are incapable of being used by God as a mass at least, though individuals may be, for any very great result in the church, because then it would seem to be by power.

“No, no,” says one. “If a man is not learned that does not signify much, a man must be eloquent.” That is another mistake, it is not by power of *eloquence* that souls are saved. I believe every man that preaches the gospel in his heart is eloquent; so I have used a wrong word. I mean, however, that great oratorical powers are very seldom made use of by God for any very great result; not even here, is God pleased to let it be seen to be by power. Ye have heard of the preaching of Whitfield did ye ever read his sermons? If ye did ye will say they were rather contemptible productions. There is nothing in them that I should think could have approached to oratory; it was only the man's earnestness that made him eloquent. Have ye heard any preacher that has been blessed by God to move the multitude? He has been eloquent, for he has spoken earnestly, but as to oratory, there has been none of it. I, for my own part, must eschew every pretension thereunto. I am certain I never think, when I come into this pulpit, “How shall I talk to this people in a grand fashion?” I think when I come up here, “I have got something to say, I will tell them it.” How I will tell them, it does not signify much to me, I shall find the words somehow or other I daresay, God helping me, but about any of the *graces* of eloquence, or the words of oratory, I am utterly and quite in the dark, nor do I wish to imitate any who have been masters in that. I believe that the men whom we call eloquent now they are dead, were laughed at in their day as poor bungling speakers. Now they are buried they are canonized, but in their lives they were abused.

Now, my brethren, God, I do think will generally cast a slur upon fine speaking and grand compositions and so on, in order that he may show that it is not by individual power, but by his Spirit. I could stand here, and point my finger in a certain circle around this place, and I could pause at such a chapel and say, There is a man preaching there whose compositions are worthy to be read by the most intellectual of persons, but whose chapel contains this morning, a hundred. I will point you to another of whose preaching we can say that it was the most faultless oratory to which we ever listened, but his congregation were nearly all of them asleep. We might point you to another, of whom we could say that there was the most chaste simplicity, the most extraordinary beauty in the compositions he delivered, but there has not been a soul known to be saved in the chapel for years. Now, why is that? I think it is because God says, it is not by power, it shall not be by individual power. And I will say this that whenever God is pleased to raise up a man by individual power to move the world, or to work any reform, he invariably selects a man whose faults and whose errors are so glaring and apparent to everyone, that we are obliged to say, “I wonder that man

should do it, surely it must be of God, it could not be of that man.” No, there are some men who are too great for God’s designs, their style is too excellent. If God blessed them the world would cry—especially the literary world—it is their talent that God blesses; but God, on the other hand takes up some rough fellow, truly an earthen vessel, puts his treasure in him, and just shakes the whole world. People cry, “We do not see how it is, it is not in the man certainly;” the critic takes up his pen, dips it in gall, writes a most fearful character about the man, the man reads it, and says, “It is just true, and I am glad of it for if it had not been true God would not have used me. I glory in my infirmities, because Christ’s own power rests on me. If I had not those infirmities so much could not have been done, but the very infirmities have insured against men’s saying, ‘It was the man.’” I have often been delighted at some of my opponents, they have sneered at everything in me—from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, I have been all over bruises and putrifying sores, every word has been vulgarity, every action has been grotesque, the whole of it has been abominable and blasphemous; and I said, ‘Well that is delightful, now that is good.’ And while some persons have said, ‘Now we must defend our minister,’ I have thought, “You had better let it alone, it is much the best that it should be so; for suppose it is true—and it is, the most of it—there is all the more glory to God; for who can deny that the work is done?” And he is a great workman that can use bad tools and yet produce a fine piece of workmanship; and if the conversion of hundreds of souls now present, if the sobriety of drunkards, if the chastity of harlots, if the salvation of men who have been swearers, blasphemers, thieves and vagabonds from their youth up, is not a grand result, I do not know what is. And if I have been the unwieldy, uncouth, unworthy tool employed in doing it, I bless God, for then you cannot honor me, but must give all the glory to him, and to him all the glory belongs. He will have it proved that “It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

III. And now to conclude lest I weary you. Whilst the progress and advance of the church are neither to be accomplished by the collected might of armies, corporations, nor churches, nor by the separate exertions of individuals, by the might neither of learning nor of eloquence, yet both the objects are to be accomplished BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

I was thinking, yesterday, my friends, what a magnificent change would come over the face of Christendom if God were on a sudden to pour out his Spirit as he did on the day of Pentecost. I was then sitting down meditating upon this sermon, and I thought! oh, if God should pour his Spirit upon me, should I not leap from this place where I am now sitting, and on my knees begin to pray as I never did before; and should I not go next Sabbath-day to a congregation who would feel a solemn awe about them! Every word I spoke would strike like arrows from the bow of God; and they themselves would feel that it was “none other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven!” Thousands would cry out, “What must I do to be saved?” and go away carrying the divine fire till the whole of this city would be kindled. And then I had pictured to myself what would come over all the churches if they

were in the same condition, and all the people received that same Spirit. I had seen the minister from Monday morning till Saturday night doing little or nothing; delivering his weekly lecture, attending one prayer-meeting, and thinking himself hard worked I saw him, on a sudden, start from his couch, and go round to all the sick of his chapel, and I marked how he delivered a short address of comfort to the sick, with such holy gravity and such divine simplicity, that they lifted their heads from their pillows, and began to sing, even in the agonies of death. I thought I saw others of them girding up their loins, and crying, "What am I doing?—men are perishing, and I am preaching to them but three times a week and am called to the work of the ministry." I thought I read of all those ministers going into the open-air to preach next Monday night; I thought I saw the whole of them flying, like angels fly, to-and-fro this land. And then I thought I saw the deacons all full of the Spirit too, and found them with all their powers, doing everything in the fear of God. I found those who had been lords and rulers no longer seeking to be like Diotrephes; I saw the heavenly influence spread over every mind, I saw the vestries too small for the prayer-meetings, and I saw the chapel crowded, and I heard the brethren who year after year had prayed the same monotonous prayer, break forth in earnest burning words; I saw the whole assembly melted in tears when the pastor addressed them, and urged them to prayer, and I heard the brethren one by one as they rose up speak like men who had been with Jesus, and had learned how to pray. They prayed as if they had heard Christ pray in Gethsemane, that prayer which was such as never man prayed; and then I thought I saw all those members, and those deacons, and those pastors going out into the world. And, oh, I pictured what preaching there would be, what tract distributing, what alms giving, what holy living! And then I already thought I heard every house at vesper uttering its song, and every cottage as its matin, sending up its prayer to heaven. I thought I saw upon every ploughshare "consecrated to God," and every bell upon the horses, "holiness unto the Lord." And then I thought I saw the different denominations rushing into each others arms; I saw the bishop doff his mitre, and clasp his dissenting brother and call him friend, and bid him preach in his cathedral. And I thought I saw the stiff puritanical dissenter casting away his hatred of conformity, and receiving the Church of England brother to his heart. I thought I saw baptized and unbaptized sitting at one table. I saw Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Independent, and Quaker agreeing in one thing—that Christ crucified was all: and clasping one another's hands. Ay, and then I thought I have the angels coming down from heaven. And I was not long before I finished my reverie by hearing the shout—"Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" It was a reverie, but it will be true some day. By the Spirit of God all this will be accomplished. How and by what means I know not, but I know the great agency must be the Holy Spirit.

And now, dear friends, let me counsel you. The grand thing the church wants in this time, is God's Holy Spirit. You all get up plans and say, "Now, if the church were altered a little bit, it would go on better." You think if there were different ministers, or different

church order, or something different, then all would be well. No, dear friends, it is not there the mistake lies, it is that we want more of the Spirit. It is as if you saw a locomotive engine upon a railway, and it would not go, and they put up a driver, and they said, "Now, that driver will just do." They try another and another. One proposes that such-and-such a wheel should be altered, but still it will not go. Some one then bursts in amongst those who are conversing and says, "No, friends; but the reason why it will not move, is because there is no steam. You have no fire, you have no water in the boiler: that's why it will not go. There may be some faults about it; it may want a bit of paint here and there, but it will go well enough with all those faults if you do but get the steam up." But now people are saying, "This must be altered, and that must be altered; but it would go no better unless God the Spirit should come to bless us. You may have the same ministers, and they shall be a thousand times more useful for God, if God is pleased to bless them. You shall have the same deacons, they shall be a thousand times more influential than they are now, when the Spirit is poured down upon them from on high. That is the church's great want, and until that want be supplied, we may reform, and reform, and still be just the same. We want the Holy Spirit, and then whatever faults there may be in our organization, they can never materially impede the progress of Christianity, when once the Spirit of the Lord God is in our midst.

But I beseech you be earnest in praying for this. Do you know that there is no reason to day, why I should not have preached to day, so that every soul in the place was converted, if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to manifest himself. There is not any solitary shadow of a reason why every soul that has been within the sound of my lips should not have been converted by something said to-day if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to bless the word. Now I will repeat, there is not a humble Primitive Methodist, nor a poor insignificant preacher of any sort on earth, but who, if he preaches the truth, God the Spirit may not make as useful in conversion, as any of the great departed, who are now before God's throne. All we want is the Spirit of God. Dear Christian friends, go home and pray for it; give no rest until God reveals himself, do not tarry, here you are, do not be content to go on in your everlasting jog-trot as you have done; do not be content with the mere round of formalities. Awake, O Zion; awake, awake, awake! Put on thy strength, O Jerusalem, start ye from your slumbers, arouse ye from your lethargy, and cry unto God and say unto him, "Awake, awake! put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord, as in the ancient days," then when he shall do it, you will find that while it is not by might, nor by power, it is by God's Spirit.

And now I conclude with a brief address that shall not occupy a moment. Sinner, unconverted sinner, thou hast often tried to save thyself, but thou hast often failed. Thou hast, by thine own power and might, sought to curb thy evil passions and licentious desires with thee, I lament that all thine efforts have been unsuccessful. And I warn thee, it will be unsuccessful, for thou never canst by thine own might save thyself; with all the strength thou hast, thou never canst regenerate thine own soul; thou canst never cause thyself to be born again,

And though the new birth is absolutely necessary, it is absolutely impossible to thee, unless God the Spirit shall do it. I pray for thee that God the Spirit may convince thee of sin, and if thou art already convinced, I bid thee believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for he has died for thee, hath washed away thy sins; thou art forgiven. Believe that; be happy, and go thy way rejoicing; an, God Almighty be with thee until thou diest.

India's Ills and England's Sorrows

A Sermon

(No. 150)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 6, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.”—[Jeremiah 9:1](#).

SOMETIMES tears are base things; the offspring of a cowardly spirit. Some men weep when they should knit their brows, and many a woman weepeth when she should resign herself to the will of God. Many of those briny drops are but an expression of child-like weakness. It were well if we could wipe such tears away, and face a frowning world with a constant countenance. But oft times tears are the index of strength. There are periods when they are the noblest things in the world. The tears of penitents are precious: a cup of them were worth a king's ransom. It is no sign of weakness when a man weeps for sin, it shows that he hath strength of mind; nay more, that he hath strength imparted by God, which enables him to forswear his lusts and overcome his passions, and to turn unto God with full purpose of heart. And there are other tears, too, which are the evidences not of weakness, but of might—the tears of tender sympathy are the children of strong affection, and they are strong like their parents. He that loveth much, must weep much; much love and much sorrow must go together in this vale of tears. The unfeeling heart, the unloving spirit, may pass from earth's portal to its utmost bound almost without a sigh except for itself; but he that loveth, hath digged as many wells of tears as he has chosen objects of affection; for by as many as our friends are multiplied, by so many must our griefs be multiplied too, if we have love enough to share in their griefs and to bear their burden for them. The largest hearted man will miss many sorrows that the little man will feel, but he will have to endure many sorrows the poor narrow-minded spirit never knoweth. It needs a mighty prophet like Jeremiah to weep as mightily as he. Jeremiah was not weak in his weeping; the strength of his mind and the strength of his love were the parents of his sorrow. “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.” This is no expression of weak sentimentalism; this is no utterance of mere whining presence; it is the burst of a strong soul, strong in its affection, strong in its devotion, strong in its self-sacrifice. I would to God we knew how to weep like this; and if we might not weep so frequently as Jeremy I wish that when we did weep, we did weep as well.

It would seem as if some men had been sent into this world for the very purpose of being the world's weepers. God's great house is thoroughly furnished with everything, everything

that can express the thoughts and the emotions of the inhabitant, God hath made. I find in nature, plants to be everlasting weepers. There by the lonely brook, where the maiden cast away her life, the willow weeps for ever; and there in the grave yard where men lie slumbering till the trumpet of the archangel shall awaken them, stands the dull cypress, mourning in its sombre garments. Now as it is with nature, so it is with the race of man. Mankind have bravery and boldness; they must have their heroes to express their courage. Mankind have some love to their fellow-creatures; they must have their fine philanthropists to live out mankind's philanthropy. Men have their sorrows, they must have their weepers; they must have men of sorrows who have it for their avocation and their business, to weep, from the cradle to the grave to be ever weeping, not so much for themselves as for the woes of others, it may be I have some such here; I shall be happy to enlist their sympathies; and truly if I have none of that race, I shall boldly appeal to the whole mass of you, and I will bring before you causes of great grief; and when I bid you by the love you bear to man, and to his God, to begin to weep; if you have tears, these hard times will compel you to shed them now. Come, let me show you wherefore I have taken this my text, and why I have uttered this mournful language; and if your hearts be not as stolid as stone, sure there should be some tears shed this morning. For if I be not foolish in my utterances and faint in my speech, you will go home to your chambers to weep there. "Oh that *my* head were waters and *mine* eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

I want your griefs this morning, first, *for persons actually slain*—"the slain of the daughter of our people;" and then I shall need your tears *for those morally slain*, "the slain of the daughter of our people."

I. To begin, then, with ACTUAL MURDER AND REAL BLOODSHED. My brethren, our hearts are sick nigh unto death with the terrible news brought us post after post, telegraph after telegraph; we have read many letters of the Times, day after day, until we have folded up that paper, and professed before God that we could read no more. Our spirits have been harrowed by the most fearful and unexpected cruelty. We, perhaps, may not have been personally interested in the bloodshed, so far as our own husbands, wives, brothers, and sisters have been concerned, but we have felt the tie of kindred very strongly when we have found our race so cruelly butchered in the land of the East. It is for us to-day humbly to confess our crime. The government of India has been a cruel government; it has much for which to appear before the bar of God. Its tortures—if the best evidence is to be believed—have been of the most inhuman kind; God forgive the men who have committed such crimes in the British name. But those days are past. May God blot out the sin. We do not forget our own guilt; but an overwhelming sense of the guilt of others, who have with such cold-hearted cruelty tormented men and women, may well excuse us if we do not dilate upon the subject.

Alas! alas, for our brethren there! They have died; alas for them! They have been slain by the sword of treachery, and traitorously murdered by men who swore allegiance. Alas for them! But, O ye soldiers, we weep not for you. Even when ye were tortured, ye had not that high dishonor to bear to which the other sex has been obliged to submit. O England! weep for thy daughters with a bitter lamentation; let thine eyes run down with rivers of blood for them. Had they been crushed within the folds of the hideous boa, or had the fangs of the tiger been red with their blood, happy would their fate have been compared with the indignities they have endured! O Earth! thou hast beheld crimes which antiquity could not parallel; thou hast seen bestial lust gratified upon the purest and the best of mortals. God's fairest creatures stained; those loved ones, who could not brook the name of lust, given up to the embraces of incarnate devils! Weep, Britain, weep, weep for thy sons and for thy daughters! If thou art cold-hearted now, if thou readest the tale of infamy now without a tear, thou art no mother to them! Sure thine heart must have failed thee, and thou hast become less loving than thine own lions, and less tender than beasts of prey, if thou dost not weep for the maiden and the wife, Brethren, I am not straining history; I am not endeavoring to be pathetic where there is no pathos. No; my subject of itself is all pathos; it is my poor way of speaking that doth spoil it. I have not to-day to act the orator's part, to garnish up that which was nothing before; I have not to magnify little griefs—rather I feel that all my utterances do but diminish the woe which every thoughtful man must feel. Oh, how have our hearts been harrowed, cut in pieces, molten in the fire! Agony hath seized upon us, and grief unutterable, when, day after day, our hopes have been disappointed, and we have heard that still the rebel rages in his fury, and still with despotic might doth as he pleaseth with the sons and daughters, the husbands and the wives of England Weep, Christians, weep! And ye ask me of what avail shall be your weeping eye bidden you weep today, because the spirit of vengeance is gathering; Britain's wrath is stirred; a black cloud is hanging over the head of the mutinous Sepoys! Their fate shall be most dreadful, their doom most tremendous, when England shall smite the murderers, as justly she must. There must be Judicial punishment enacted upon these men, so terrible that the earth shall tremble, and both the ears of him that heareth it shall tingle! I am inclined, if I can, to sprinkle some few cooling tears upon the fires of vengeance. No, no, we will not take vengeance upon ourselves. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Let not Britain's soldiers push their enemies to destruction, through a spirit of vengeance, as men, let them do it as the appointed executioners of the sentence of our laws. According to the civil code of every country under heaven, these men are condemned to die. Not as soldiers should we war with them, but as malefactors we must execute the law upon them. They have committed treason against government, and for that crime alone the doom is death! But they are murderers, and rightly or wrongly, our law is, that the murderer must die the death. God must have this enormous sin punished, and though we would feel no vengeance as Britons, yet, for the sake of government, God's

established government on earth, the ruler who beareth the sword must not now bear the sword in vain. Long have I held that war is an enormous crime; long have I regarded all battles as but murder on a large scale: but this time, I, a peaceful man, a follower of the peaceful Saviour, do propound war. No, it is not war that I propound, but a just and proper punishment. I will not aid and abet soldiers as *warriors*, but as *executioners* of a lawful sentence, which ought to be executed upon men, who, by the double crime of infamous debauchery, and fearful bloodshed, have brought upon themselves the ban and curse of God, so that they must be punished, or truth and innocence can never walk this earth. As a rule I do not believe in the utility of capital punishment, but the crime has been attended with all the horrid guilt of the cities of the plain, and is too bestial to be endured. But still, I say, I would cool down the vengeance of Britons, and therefore I would bid you weep. Ye talk of vengeance, but ye know not the men with whom ye have to deal; many a post may come, and many a month run round, and many a year may pass before ye hear of victory over those fierce men. Be not too proud. England talked once of her great deeds, and she hath since been humbled. She may yet again learn that she is not omnipotent. But ye people of God, weep, weep for this sin that hath broken loose, weep for this hell that hath found its way to earth; go to your chambers and cry out to God to stop this bloodshed. You are to be the saviours of your nation. Not on the bayonets of British soldiery, but on the prayers of British Christians, do we rest. Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, lament most bitterly, for this desperate sin; and then cry to God to save! Remember, he heareth prayer—prayer moveth the arm of the Omnipotent. Let us proclaim a fast; let us gather a solemn assembly; let us cry mightily unto him; let us ask the God of armies to avenge himself; let us pray him so to send the light of the gospel into the land, that such a crime may be impossible a second time; and this time, so to put it down, that it may never have an opportunity of breaking loose again. I know not whether our government will proclaim a national fast; but certain I am it is time that every Christian should celebrate one in his own heart. I bid all of you with whom my word has one atom of respect, if my exhortation has one word of force, I do exhort you to spend special time in prayer just now. Oh! my friends, ye cannot hear the shrieks, ye have not seen the terror-stricken faces, ye have not beheld the flying fugitives; but you may picture them in your imagination; and he must be accursed who does not pray to God, and lift up his soul in earnest prayer, that he would be pleased now to put his shield between our fellow-subjects and their enemies. And you, especially, the representatives of divers congregations in various parts of this land, give unto God no rest until he be pleased to bestir himself. Make this your cry: “O Lord our God arise, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let all them that hate thee become as the fat of rams.” So shall God, through your prayers, haply, establish peace and vindicate justice, and “God, even our own God, shall bless us, and that right early.”

II. But I have now a greater reason for your sorrow—a more disregarded, and yet more dreadful source of woe. If the first time we said it with plaintive voice, we must a second time say it yet more plaintively—“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night,” FOR THE MORALLY SLAIN of the daughter of my people. The old adage is still true, “One-half of the world knows nothing about how the other half lives.” A large proportion of you professing Christians have been respectably brought up; you have never in your lives been the visitants of the dens of infamy, you have never frequented the haunts of wickedness, and you know but very little of the sins of your fellow creatures. Perhaps it is well that you should remain as ignorant as you are; for, where to be ignorant is to be free from temptation, it would be folly to be wise. But there are others who have been obliged to see the wickedness of their fellows; and a public teacher, especially, is bound not to speak from mere hearsay, but to know from authentic sources what is the spirit of the times. It is our business to look with eagle eye through every part of this land, and see what crime is rampant—what kind of crime, and what sort of infamy. Ah, my friends, with all the advancement of piety in this land, with all the hopeful signs of better times, with all the sunlight of glory heralding the coming morn, with all the promises and with all our hopes, we are still obliged to bid you weep because sin aboundeth and iniquity is still mighty. Oh, how many of our sons and daughters, of our friends and relatives, are slain by sin! Ye weep over battle-fields, ye shed tears on the plains of Balaklava; there are worse battlefields than there, and worse deaths than those inflicted by the sword.

Ah, weep ye for the *drunkenness* of this land! How many thousands of our race reel from our sin-palaces into perdition! Oh, if the souls of departed drunkards could be seen at this hour by the Christians of Britain, they would tremble, lift up their hands in sorrow, and begin to weep. My soul might be an everlasting Niobe, perpetually dropping showers of tears, if it might know the doom and the destruction brought on them by that one demon, and by that one demon only! I am no enthusiast, I am no total abstainer.—I do not think the cure of England's drunkenness will come from that quarter. I respect those who thus deny themselves, with a view to the good of others, and should be glad to believe that they accomplish their object. But though I am no total abstainer, I hate drunkenness as much as any man breathing, and have been the means of bringing many poor creatures to relinquish this bestial indulgence. We believe drunkenness to be an awful crime and a horrid sin; we look on all its dreadful effects, and we stand prepared to go to war with it, and to fight side by side with abstainers, even though we may differ from them as to the mode of warfare. Oh! England, how many thousands of thy sons are murdered every year by that accursed devil of drunkenness, that hath such sway over this land!

But there are other crimes too. Alas, for that crime of *debauchery*! What scenes hath the moon seen every night! Sweetly did she shine last evening; the meadows seemed as if they were silvered with beauty when she shone upon them. But ah! what sins were transacted

beneath her pale sway! Oh, God, thou only knowest: our hearts might be sickened, and we might indeed cry for “A lodge in some vast wilderness,” had we seen what God beheld when he looked down from the moon-lit sky! Ye tell me that sins of that kind are common in the lower class of society. Alas, I know it; alas, how many a girl hath dashed herself into the river to take away her life, because she could not bear the infamy that was brought upon her! But lay not this to the poor; the infamy and sin of our streets begin not with them. It beginneth with the highest ranks—with what we call the noblest classes of society. Men that have defiled themselves and others will stand in our senates, and walk among our peers; men whose characters are not reputable—it is a shame to speak even of the things that are done of them in secret—are received into the drawing rooms and into the parlors of the highest society, while the poor creature who has been the victim of their passions is hooted and cast away! O Lord God, thou alone knowest the awful ravages that this sin hath made. Thy servant’s lips can utter no more than this, he hath gone to the verge of his utterance, he feeleth that he hath no further license in his speech, still he may well cry—“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” If ye have walked the hospital, if ye have seen the refuges, if ye have talked with the inmates—and if ye know the gigantic spread of that enormous evil, ye may well sympathize with me when I say, that at the thought of it my spirit is utterly cast down. I feel that I would rather die than live whilst sin thus reigns and iniquity thus spreads.

But are these the only evils? Are these the only demons that are devouring our people? Ah, would to God it were so. Behold, throughout this land, how are men falling by every sin, disguised as it is under the shape of pleasure. Have ye never, as from some distant journey ye have returned to your houses at midnight, seen the multitudes of people who are turning out of casinos, low theatres, and other houses of sin? I do not frequent those places, nor from earliest childhood have I ever trodden those floors, but, from the company that I have seen issuing from these dens, I could only lift up my hands, and pray God to close such places; they seem to be the gates of hell, and their doors, as they very properly themselves say, “Lead to the pit.” Ah, may God be pleased to raise up many who shall warn this city, and bid Christian people by day and night “for the slain of the daughter of our people!” Christians, never leave off weeping for men’s sins and infamies. There are sins by day; God’s own day, this day is defiled, is broken in pieces and trodden under foot. There are sins every morning committed, and sins each night. If ye could see them ye might be never happy, if ye could walk in the midst of them and behold them with your eyes, if God would give you grace, ye might perpetually weep, for ye would always have cause for sorrow. “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.”

But now I must just throw in something which will more particularly apply to you. Perhaps I have very few here who would indulge in open and known sin; perhaps most of

you belong to the good and amiable class who have every kind of virtue, and of whom it must be said, "One thing thou lackest;" My heart never feels so grieved as at the sight of you. How often have I been entertained most courteously and hospitably, as the Lord's servant, in the houses of men and of women whose characters are supremely excellent, who have every virtue that could adorn a Christian, except faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; who might be held up as the very mirrors and patterns to be imitated by others. How has my heart grieved when I have thought of these, still undecided, still godless, prayerless and Christless. I have many of you in this congregation to-day—I could not put my finger upon one solitary fault in your character, you are scrupulously correct in your morals—Alas, alas, alas for you, that you should still be dead in trespasses and sins, because you have not been renewed by divine grace! So lovely, and yet without faith; so beautiful, so admirable, and yet not converted. O God, when drunkards die, when swearers perish, when harlots and seducers sink to the fate they have earned, we may well weep for such sinners; but when these who have walked in our midst and have almost been acknowledged as believers, are cast away because they leek the one thing needful, it seems enough to make angels weep. O members of churches, ye may well take up the cry of Jeremiah when ye remember what multitudes of these you have in your midst—men who have a name to live and are dead: and others, who though they profess not to be Christians, are almost persuaded to obey their Lord and Master, but are yet not partakers of the divine life of God.

But now I shall want, if I can, to press this pathetic subject a little further upon your minds. In the day when Jeremiah wept this lamentation with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, Jerusalem was in all her mirth and merriment. Jeremiah was a sad man in the midst of a multitude of merry makers; he told them that Jerusalem should be destroyed, that their temple should become a heap, and Nebuchadnezzar should lay it with the ground. They laughed him to scorn; they mocked him. Still the viol and the dance were only to be seen. Do you not picture that brave old man, for he was bravely plaintive, sitting down in the courts of the Temple? And though as yet the pillars were unfallen, and the golden roof was yet unstained, he lifted up his hands and pictured to himself this scene of Jerusalem's Temple burned with fire, her women and her children carried away captive, and her sons given to the sword. And when he pictured this, he did, as it were, in spirit set himself down upon one of the broken pillars of the Temple, and there, in the midst of desolation which was not as yet—but which faith, the evidence of things not seen, did picture to him—cry, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears." And now, to-day, here are many of you masquers and merry makers in this ball of life, ye are here merry and glad to-day, and ye marvel that I should talk of you as persons for whom we ought to weep. "Weep ye for me!" you say; "I am in health, I am in riches, I am enjoying life; why weep for me? I need none of your sentimental weeping!" Ah, but we weep because we foresee the future. If you could live here always, we might not, perhaps, weep for you; but we, by the eye of faith, look

forward to the time when the pillars of heaven must totter, when this earth must shake, when death must give up its prey, when the great white throne must be set in the clouds of heaven, and the thunders and lightnings of Jehovah shall be launched in armies, and the angels of God shall be marshalled in their ranks, to swell the pomp of the grand assize—we look forward to that hour, and by faith we see you standing before the Judge; we see his eye sternly fixed on you, we hear him read the book; we mark your tottering knees, whilst sentence after sentence of thundering wrath strikes on your appalled ear; we think we see your blanched countenances; we mark your terror beyond all description, when he cries, “Depart, ye cursed!” We hear your shrieks; we hear you cry, “Rocks hide us; mountains on us fall!” We see the angel with fiery brand pursuing you, we hear your last unutterable shriek of woe as you descend into the pit of hell—and we ask you if you could see this as we see it, would you wonder that at the thought of your destruction we are prepared to weep? “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes were a fountain of tears that I might weep” over you who will not stand in the judgment, but must be driven away like chaff into the unquenchable fire! And by the eye of faith we look further than that; we look into the grim and awful future: our faith looks through the gate of iron bound with adamant; we see the place of the condemned, our ear, opened by faith, hears “The sullen groans, and hollow moans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts!” Our eye anointed with heavenly eye salve sees the worm that never dieth, it beholds the fire that never can be quenched, and sees you writhing in the flame! O professors, if ye believed not in the wrath to come, and in hell eternal, I should not wonder that ye were unmoved by such a thought as this. But if ye believe what your Saviour said when he declared that he would destroy both body and soul in hell, I must wonder that ye could endure the thought without weeping for your fellow-creatures who are going there. If I saw mine enemy marching into the flames, I would rush between him and the fire and seek to preserve him; and will you see men and women marching on in a mad career of vice and sin, well aware that “the wages of sin is death,” and will you not interpose so much as a tear? What! are you more brutal than the beast, more stolid than the stone! It must be so, if the thought of the unutterable torment of hell, doth not draw tears from your eyes and prayer from your hearts. Oh, if to-day some strong archangel could unbolt the gates of hell, and for a solitary second permit the voice of wailing and weeping to come up to our ears; Oh, how should we grieve! Each man would put his hand upon his loins and walk this earth in terror. That shriek might make each hair stand on an end upon our heads, and then make us roll ourselves in the dust for anguish and woe—

“Oh, doleful state of dark despair,
When God has far removed,
And fixed their dreadful station where
They must not taste his love.”

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for some of you that are going there this day.

Remember, again, O Christian, that those for whom we ask you to weep this day are persons who have had great privileges, and consequently, if lost, must expect greater punishment. I do not to-day ask your sympathies for men in foreign lands, I shall not bid you weep for Hottentots or Mahomedans though ye might weep for them, and ye have goodly cause to do so—but I ask this day your tears for the slain of the daughter of your own people. Oh! what multitudes of heathens we have in all our places of worship! what multitudes of unconverted persons in all the pews of the places where we usually assemble to worship God; and I may add, what hundreds we have here who are without God, without Christ, without hope in the world. And these are not like Hottentots who have not heard the Word: they have heard it, and they have rejected it. Many of you, when you die, cannot plead, as an excuse, that you did not know your duty; you heard it plainly preached to you, you heard it in every corner of the streets, you had the book of God in your houses. You cannot say that you did not know what you must do to be saved. You read the Bible, you understand salvation—many of you are deeply taught in the theory of salvation; when ye perish, your blood must be on your own head, and the Master may well cry over you to-day, “Woe unto thee, Bethsaida, woe unto thee Chorazin! For if the mighty works that were done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” I wonder at myself this day; I hate my eyes, I feel as if I could pluck them from their sockets now, because they will not weep as I desire, over poor souls who are perishing! How many have I among you whom I love and who love me! We are no strangers to one another, we could not live at a distance from each other, our hearts have been joined together long and firmly. Ye have stood by me in the hour of tribulation, ye have listened to the Word, ye have been pleased with it; I bear you witness that if you could pluck out your eyes for me you would do it. And yet I know there are many of you true lovers of God’s Word in appearance, and certainly great lovers of God’s servant, but alas for you, that you should still be in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! Alas, my sister, I can weep for thee! Woe, woe, my brother, I can weep for thee! we have met together in God’s house, we have prayed together, and yet we must be sundered. Shepherd, some of thy flock will perish! O sheep of my pasture, people of my care, must I have that horrid thought upon me, that I must lose you? Must we, at the day of judgment, say farewell for ever? Must I bear my witness against you? I shall be honest; I have dealt faithfully with your souls. God is my witness, I have often preached in weakness; often have I had to groan before him that I have not preached as I could desire; but I have never preached insincerely. Nobody will ever dare to accuse me of dishonesty in this respect; not one of your smiles have I ever courted. I have never dreaded your frowns; I have been in weariness oftentimes, when I should have rested, preaching God’s Word. But what of that? That were nothing; only this much, there is some responsib-

ility resting upon you. And remember, that to perish under the sound of the Gospel is to perish more terribly than anywhere else. But, my hearers, must that be your lot? And must I be witness against you in the day of judgment? I pray God it may not be so; I beseech the Master, that he may spare us each such a fate as that.

And now, dear friends I have one word to add before I leave this point. Some of you need not look round on this congregation to find cause for weeping. My pious brethren and sisters, you have cause enough to weep in your own families. Ah, mother! I know thy griefs; thou hast had cause to cry to God with weeping eyes for many a mournful hour, because of thy son; thine offspring hath turned against thee; and he that came forth of thee has despised his mother's God. Father, thou hast carefully brought up thy daughter; thou has nourished her when she was young, and taken her fondly in thine arms; she was the delight of thy life, yet she hath sinned against thee and against God. Many of you have sons and daughters that you often mention in your prayers, but never with hope. You have often thought that God has said of your son, "Ephraim is given to idols; let him alone;" the child of your affection has become an adder stinging your heart! Oh, then weep, I beseech you. Parents, do not leave off weeping for your children; do not become hardened towards them, sinners though they be; it may be that God may yet bring them to himself. It was but last church meeting that we received into our communion a young friend who was educated and brought up by a pious minister in Colchester. She had been there many years, and when she came away to London the minister said to her, "Now, my girl, I have prayed for you hundreds of times, and I have done all I can with you; your heart is as hard as a stone; I must leave you with God!" That broke her heart; she is now converted to Jesus. How many sons and daughters have made their parents feel the same! "There," they have said, "I must leave you, I cannot do more." But in saying that, they have not meant that they would leave them unwept for, but they have thought within themselves, that if they were damned, they would follow them weeping to the very gates of hell, if by tears they could decoy them into heaven. How can a man be a Christian, and not love his offspring? How can a man be a believer in Jesus Christ, and yet have a cold and hard heart in the things of the kingdom, towards his children? I have heard of ministers of a certain sect, and professors of a certain class, who have despised family prayer, who have laughed at family godliness and thought nothing of it. I cannot understand how the men can know as much as they do about the gospel, and yet have so little of the spirit of it. I pray God, deliver you and deliver me from anything like that. No, it is our business to train up our children in the fear of the Lord; and though we cannot give them grace, it is ours to pray to the God who can give it; and in answer to our many supplications, he will not turn us away, but he will be pleased to take notice of our prayers and to regard our sighs.

And now, Christian mourners, I have given you work enough; may God the Holy Spirit enable you to do it. Let me exhort you, yet once again, to weep. Do you need a copy?

Behold your Master; he has come to the brow of the hill; he sees Jerusalem lying on the hill opposite to him, he looks down upon it, as he sees it there—beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth—instead of feeling the rapture of some artist who surveys the ramparts of a strong city, and marks the position of some magnificent tower in the midst of glorious scenery, he bursts out and he cries, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem I how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” Go ye now your ways, and as ye stand on any of the hills around, and beheld this Behemoth city! lying in the valley, say; “O London, London! how great thy guilt. Oh! that the Master would gather thee under his wing, and make thee his city, the joy of the whole earth! O London, London! full of privileges, and full of sin, exalted to heaven by the gospel, thou shalt be cast down to hell by thy rejection of it!” And then, when ye have wept over London, go and weep over the street in which you live, as you see the sabbath broken, and God’s laws trampled upon, and men’s bodies profaned—go ye and weep! Weep, for the court in which you live in your humble poverty, weep for the square in which you live in your magnificent wealth; weep for the humbler street in which you live in competence, weep for your neighbors and your friends, lest any of them, having lived godless, may die godless! Then go to your house, weep for your family, for your servants, for your husband, for your wife, for your children. Weep, weep, cease not weeping, till God hath renewed them by his Spirit. And if you have any friends with whom you sinned in your past life, be earnest for their salvation. George Whitfield said there were many young men with whom he played at cards, in his lifetime, and spent hours in wasting his time when he ought to have been about other business; and when he was converted, his first thought was, “I must by God’s grace have these converted too.” And he never rested, till he could say, that he did not know of one of them, a companion of his guilt, who was not now a companion with him in the tribulation of the gospel. Oh, let it be so with you! Nor let your exertions end in tears; mere weeping will do nothing without action. Get you on your feet, ye that have voices and might, go forth and preach the gospel, preach it in every street and lane of this huge city; ye that have wealth, go forth and spend it for the poor, and sick, and needy, and dying, the uneducated, the unenlightened; ye that have time, go forth and spend it in deeds of goodness; ye that have power in prayer, go forth and pray, ye that can handle the pen, go forth and write down iniquity—every one to his post, every one of you to your gun in this day of battle, now for God and for his truth; for God and for the right; let every one of us who knows the Lord seek to fight under his banner! O God, without whom all our exertions are vain, come now and stir up thy church to greater diligence and more affectionate earnestness, that we may not have in future such cause to weep as we have this day! Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus; he hath died, look to him and live, and God the Almighty bless you! To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever.

The Condescension of Christ

A Sermon

(No. 151)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 13, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich”—[2 Corinthians 8:9](#).

THE APOSTLE, in this chapter, was endeavoring to stir up the Corinthians to liberality. He desired them to contribute something for those who were the poor of the flock, that he might be able to minister to their necessities. He tells them, that the churches of Macedonia, though very much poorer than the church at Corinth, had done even beyond their means for the relief of the Lords family, and he exhorts the Corinthians to do the same. But suddenly recollecting that examples taken from inferiors seldom have a powerful effect, he lays aside his argument drawn from the church of Macedonia, and he holds before them a reason for liberality which the hardest heart can scarcely resist, if once that reason be applied by the Spirit. “My brethren,” said he, “there is One above, by whom you hope you have been saved, One whom you call Master and Lord, now if you will but imitate him, you can not be ungenerous or illiberal. For, my brethren, I tell you a thing which is an old thing with you and an undisputed truth—’For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.’ Let this constrain you to benevolence.” O Christian, whenever thou art inclined to an avaricious withholding from the church of God, think of thy Saviour giving up all that he had to serve thee, and canst thou then, when thou beholdest self-denial so noble,—canst thou then be selfish, and regard thyself, when the claims of the poor of the flock are pressed upon thee? Remember Jesus; think thou seest him look thee in the face and say to thee, “I gave myself for thee, and dost thou withhold thyself from me? For if thou dost so, thou knowest not my love in all its heights and depths and lengths and breadths.”

And now, dear friends, the argument of the apostle shall be our subject to-day. It divides itself in an extremely simple manner. We have first, *the pristine condition of our Saviour*—“He was rich.” We have next, *his condescension*—“He became poor.” And then we have *the effect and result of his poverty*—“That we might be made rich.” We shall then close by giving you a doctrine, a question, and an exhortation. May God bless all these, and help us to tell them aright.

I. First, then, our text tells us THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS RICH. Think not that our Saviour began to live when he was born of the Virgin Mary; imagine not that he dates his existence from the manger at Bethlehem; remember he is the Eternal, he is before all things,

and by him all things consist. There was never a time in which there was not God. And just so, there was never a period in which there was not Christ Jesus our Lord. He is self-existent, hath no beginning of days, neither end of years; he is the immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Saviour. Now, in the past eternity which had elapsed before his mission to this world, we are told that Jesus Christ was rich; and to those of us who believe his glories and trust in his divinity, it is not hard to see how he was so. Jesus was rich *in possessions*. Lift up thine eye, believer, and for a moment review the riches of my Lord Jesus, before he condescended to become poor for thee. Behold him, sitting upon his throne and declaring his own all-sufficiency. "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the cattle on a thousand hills are mine. Mine are the hidden treasures of gold; mine are the pearls that the diver can not reach; mine every precious thing that earth hath seen." The Lord Jesus might have said, "I can stretch my scepter from the east even to the west, and all is mine; the whole of this world, and yon worlds that glitter in far off space, all are mine. The illimitable expanse of unmeasured space, filled as it is with worlds that I have made, all this is mine. Fly upward, and thou canst not reach the summit of the hill of my dominions; dive downward, and thou canst not enter into the innermost depths of my sway. From the highest throne in glory to the lowest pit of hell, all, all is mine without exception. I can put the broad arrow of my kingdom upon every thing that I have made.

But he had besides that which makes men richer still. We have heard of kings in olden times who were fabulously rich, and when their riches were summed up, we read in the old romances, "And this man was possessed of the philosopher's stone, whereby he turned all things into gold." Surely all the treasures that he had before were as nothing compared with this precious stone that brought up the rear. Now, whatever might be the wealth of Christ in things created, he had the *power of creation*, and therein lay his boundless wealth. If he had pleased he could have spoken worlds into existence; he had but to lift his finger, and a new universe as boundless as the present would have leaped into existence. At the will of his mind, millions of angels would have stood before him, legions of bright spirits would have flashed into being. He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. He who said, "Light, be," and light was, had power to say to all things, "Be," and they should be. Herein then, lay his riches; this creating power was one of the brightest jewels of his crown.

We call men rich, too, who have *honor*, and though men have never so much wealth, yet if they be in disgrace and shame, they must not reckon themselves among the rich. But our Lord Jesus had honor, honor such as none but a divine being could receive. When he sat upon his throne, before he relinquished the glorious mantle of his sovereignty to become a man, all earth was filled with his glory. He could look both beneath and all around him, and the inscription, "Glory be unto God," was written over all space; day and night the smoking incense of praise ascended before him from golden viols held by spirits who bowed

in reverence; the harps of myriads of cherubim and seraphim continually thrilled with his praise, and the voices of all those mighty hosts were ever eloquent in adoration. It may be, that on set days the princes from the far off realms, the kings, the mighty ones of his boundless realms, came to the court of Christ, and brought each his annual revenue. Oh, who can tell but that in the vast eternity, at certain grand eras, the great bell was rung, and all the mighty hosts that were created gathered together in solemn review before his throne? Who can tell the high holiday that was kept in the court of heaven when these bright spirits bowed before his throne in joy and gladness, and, all united, raised their voices in shouts and hallelujahs such as mortal ear hath never heard. Oh, can ye tell the depths of the rivers of praise that flowed hard by the city of God? Can ye imagine to yourselves the sweetness of that harmony that perpetually poured into the ear of Jesus, Messiah, King, Eternal, equal with God his Father? No; at the thought of the glory of his kingdom, and the riches and majesty of his power, our souls are spent within us, our words fail, we can not utter the tithe of his glories.

Nor was he poor in any other sense. He that hath wealth on earth, and honor too, is poor if he hath not *love*. I would rather be the pauper, dependent upon charity, and have love, than I would be the prince, despised and hated, whose death is looked for as a boon. Without love, man is poor—give him all the diamonds, and pearls, and gold that mortal hath conceived. But Jesus was not poor in love. When he came to earth, he did not come to get our love because his soul was solitary. Oh no, his Father had a full delight in him from all eternity. The heart of Jehovah, the first person of the Sacred Trinity, was divinely, immutably linked to him; he was beloved of the Father and of the Holy Spirit; the three persons took a sacred complacency and delight in each other. And besides that, how was he loved by those bright spirits who had not fallen. I can not tell what countless orders and creatures there are created who still stand fast in obedience to God. It is not possible for us to know whether there are, or not, as many races of created beings as we know there are created men on earth. We can not tell but that in the boundless regions of space, there are worlds inhabited by beings infinitely superior to us: but certain it is, there were the holy angels, and they loved our Saviour; they stood day and night with wings outstretched, waiting for his commands, hearkening to the voice of his word; and when he bade them fly, there was love in their countenance, and joy in their hearts. They loved to serve him, and it is not all fiction that when there was war in heaven, and when God cast out the devil and his legions, then the elect angels showed their love to him, being valiant in fight and strong in power. He wanted not our love to make him happy, he was rich enough in love without us.

Now, though a spirit from the upper world should come to tell you of the riches of Jesus he could not do it. Gabriel, in thy flights thou hast mounted higher than my imagination dares to follow thee, but thou hast never gained the summit of the throne of God.

“Dark with insufferable light thy skirts appear.”

Jesus, who is he that could look upon the brow of thy Majesty, who is he that could comprehend the strength of the arm of thy might? Thou art God, thou art infinite, and we poor finite things, are lost in thee. The insect of an hour can not comprehend thyself. We bow before thee, we adore thee; thou art God over all, blessed for ever. But as for the comprehension of thy boundless riches, as for being able to tell thy treasures, or to reckon up thy wealth, that were impossible. All we know is, that the wealth of God, that the treasures of the infinite, that the riches of eternity, were all thine own: thou wast rich beyond all thought.

II. The Lord Jesus Christ, then, was rich. We all believe that, though none of us can truly speak it forth. Oh, how surprised angels were, when they were first informed that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Light and Majesty, intended to shroud himself in clay and become a babe, and live and die! We know not how it was first mentioned to the angels, but when the rumor first began to get afloat among the sacred hosts, you may imagine what strange wonderment there was. What! was it true that he whose crown was all bedight with stars, would lay that crown aside? What! was it certain that he about whose shoulders was cast the purple of the universe, would become a man dressed in a peasants garment? Could it be true that he who was everlasting and immortal would one day be nailed to a cross? Oh! how their wonderment increased! They desired to look into it. And when he descended from on high, they followed him; for Jesus was "seen of angels," and seen in a special sense, for they looked upon him in rapturous amazement, wondering what it all could mean. "He for our sakes became poor." Do you see him as on that day of heaven's eclipse he did ungird his majesty? Oh, can ye conceive the yet increasing wonder of the heavenly hosts when the deed was actually done, when they saw the tiara taken off, when they saw him unbind his girdle of stars, and cast away his sandals of gold? Can ye conceive it, when he said to them, "I do not disdain the womb of the virgin; I am going down to earth to become a man?" Can ye picture them as they declared they would follow him! Yes, they followed him as near as the world would permit them. And when they came to earth they began to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." Nor would they go away till they had made the shepherds wonder, and till heaven had hung out new stars in honor of the new-born King. And now wonder, ye angels, the Infinite has become an infant; he, upon whose shoulders the universe doth hang, hangs at his mothers breast; he who created all things, and bears up the pillars of creation, hath now become so weak that he must be carried by a woman! And oh, wonder, ye that knew him in his riches, whilst ye admire his poverty! Where sleeps the new-born King? Had he the best room in Caesar's palace? hath a cradle of gold been prepared for him, and pillows of down, on which to rest his head? No, where the ox fed, in the dilapidated stable, in the manger, there the Saviour lies, swathed in the swaddling bands of the children of poverty! Nor there doth he rest long; on a sudden his mother must carry him to Egypt; he goeth there, and becometh a stranger in a strange land.

When he comes back, see him that made the worlds handle the hammer and the nails, assisting his father in the trade of a carpenter! Mark him who has put the stars on high, and made them glisten in the night; mark him without one star of glory upon his brow—a simple child, as other children. Yet, leave for a while the scenes of his childhood and his earlier life; see him when he becomes a man, and now ye may say, indeed, that for our sakes he did become poor. Never was there a poorer man than Christ; he was the prince of poverty. He was the reverse of Croesus—*he* might be on the top of the hill of riches, *Christ* stood in the lowest vale of poverty. Look at his dress, it is woven from the top through out, the garment of the poor! As for his food, he oftentimes did hunger; and always was dependent upon the charity of others for the relief of his wants! He who scattered the harvest o’er the broad acres of the world, had not sometimes wherewithal to stay the pangs of hunger? He who digged the springs of the ocean, sat upon a well and said to a Samaritan woman, “Give me to drink!” He rode in no chariot, he walked his weary way, foot sore, o’er the flints of Galilee! He had not where to lay his head. He looked upon the fox as it hurried to its burrow, and the fowl as it went to its resting-place, and he said, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay my head.” He who had once been waited on by angels, becomes the servant of servants, takes a towel, girds himself, and washes his disciples’ feet! He who was once honored with the hallelujahs of ages, is now spit upon and despised! He who was loved by his Father, and had abundance of the wealth of affection, could say, “He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Oh, for words to picture the humiliation of Christ! What leagues of distance between him that sat upon the throne, and him that died upon the cross! Oh, who can tell the mighty chasm between yon heights of glory, and the cross of deepest woe! Trace him, Christian, he has left thee his manger to show thee how God came down to man. He hath bequeathed thee his cross to show thee how man can ascend to God. Follow him, follow him, all his journey through; begin with him in the wilderness of temptation, see him fasting there, and hungering with the wild beasts around him; trace him along his weary way, as the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He is the byword of the drunkard, he is the song of the scorner, and he is hooted at by the malicious; see him as they point their finger at him, and call him “drunken man and wine-bibber!” Follow him along his *via dolorosa*, until at last you meet him among the olives of Gethsemane; see him sweating great drops of blood! Follow him to the pavement of Gabbatha; see him pouring out rivers of gore beneath the cruel whips of Roman soldiers! With weeping eye follow him to the cross of Calvary, see him nailed there! Mark his poverty, so poor that they have stripped him naked from head to foot, and exposed him to the face of the sun! So poor, that when he asked them for water they gave him vinegar to drink! So poor that his unpillowed head is girt with thorns in death! Oh, Son of Man, I know not which to admire most, thine height of glory, or thy depths of misery! Oh, Man, slain for us, shall we not exalt thee? God over all, blessed for ever, shall we not

give thee the loudest song? “He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.” If I had a tale to tell you this day, of some king, who, out of love to some fair maiden, left his kingdom and became a peasant like herself, ye would stand and wonder, and would listen to the charming tale; but when I tell of God concealing his dignity to become our Saviour, our hearts are scarcely touched. Ah, my friends, we know the tale so well, we have heard it so often; and, alas, some of us tell it so badly that we cannot expect that you would be as interested in it as the subject doth demand. But surely, as it is said of some great works of architecture, that though they be seen every morning, there is always something fresh to wonder at; so we may say of Christ, that though we saw him every day, we should always see fresh reason to love, and wonder, and adore. “He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.”

I have thought that there is one peculiarity about the poverty of Christ, that ought not to be forgotten by us. Those who were nursed upon the lap of want feel less the woes of their condition. But I have met with others whose poverty I could pity. They were once rich; their very dress which now hangs about them in tatters, tells you that they once stood foremost in the ranks of life. You meet them amongst the poorest of the poor; you pity them more than those who have been born and bred to poverty, because they have known something better. Amongst all those who are poor, I have always found the greatest amount of suffering in those who had seen better days. I can remember, even now, the look of some who have said to me when they have received assistance—and I have given it as delicately as I could, lest it should look like charity—“Ah, sir, I have known better days.” And the tear stood in the eye, and the heart was smitten at bitter recollections. The least slight to such a person, or even too unmasked a kindness, becomes like a knife cutting the heart. “I have known better days,” sounds like a knell over their joys. And verily our Lord Jesus might have said in all his sorrows, “I have known better days than these.” Methinks when he was tempted of the devil in the wilderness, it must have been hard in him to have restrained himself from dashing the devil into pieces. If I had been the Son of God, methinks, feeling as I do now, if that devil had tempted me, I should have dashed him into the nethermost hell, in the twinkling of an eye! And then conceive the patience our Lord must have had, standing on the pinnacle of the temple, when the devil said, “Fall down and worship me.” He would not touch him, the vile deceiver, but let him do what he pleased. Oh! what might of misery and love there must have been in the Saviour’s heart when he was spit upon by the men he had created; when the eyes he himself had filled with vision looked on him with scorn, and when the tongues, to which he himself had given utterance, hissed and blasphemed him! Oh, my friends, if the Saviour had felt as we do, and I doubt not he did feel in some measure as we do—only by great patience he curbed himself—methinks he ought have swept them all away; and, as they said, he might have come down from the cross, and delivered himself, and destroyed them utterly. It was mighty patience that could bear to tread this world beneath his feet, and not to crush it, when it so ill-treated its Redeemer. You marvel at the patience

which restrained him; you marvel also at the poverty he must have felt, the poverty of spirit, when they rebuked him and he reviled them not again; when they scoffed him, and yet he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He had seen brighter days; that made his misery more bitter, and his poverty more poor.

III. Well, now we come to the third point—WHY DID THE SAVIOUR COME TO DIE AND BE POOR? Hear this, ye sons of Adam—the Scripture says, "For your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." For *your* sakes. Now, when I address you as a great congregation, you will not feel the beauty of this expression, "For *your* sake." Husband and wife, walking in the fear of God, let me take you by the hand and look you in the face, let me repeat those words, "for *your* sakes he became poor." Young man, let a brother of thine own age, look on thee and repeat these words, "Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor." Gray-headed believer, let me look on you and say the same, "For *your* sake he became poor." Brethren, take the word home, and see if it does not melt you—"Though he was rich, yet for *my* sake he became poor." Beg for the influences of the Spirit upon that truth, and it will make your heart devout and your spirit loving—"I the chief of sinners am, yet for my sake he died." Come, let me hear you speak; let us bring the sinner here, and let him soliloquize—"I cursed him, I blasphemed, and yet for my sake he was made poor; I scoffed at his ministers, I broke his Sabbath, yet for my sake was he made poor. What! Jesus, couldst thou die for one who was not worth thy having? Couldst thou shed thy blood for one who would have shed thy blood, if it had been in his power? What! couldst thou die for one so worthless, so vile?" "Yes, yes," says Jesus, "I shed that blood for thee." Now let the saint speak: "I," he may say, "have professed to love him, but how cold my love, how little have I served him! How far have I lived from him; I have not had sweet communion with him as I ought to have had. When have I been spending and spent in his service? And yet, my Lord thou dost say, 'for *thy* sake I was made poor.'" "Yes," saith Jesus, "see me in my miseries; see me in my agonies; see me in my death—all these I suffered for *thy* sake." Wilt thou not love him who loved thee to this great excess, and became poor for thy sake?

That, however, is not the point to which we wish to bring you, just now; the point is this, *the reason why Christ died* was, "that we through his poverty might be rich." He became poor from his riches, that our poverty might become rich out of his poverty. Brethren, we have now a joyful theme before us—those who are partakers of the Saviour's blood are rich. All those for whom the Saviour died, having believed in his name and given themselves to him, are this day rich. And yet I have some of you here who can not call a foot of land your own. You have nothing to call your own to-day, you know not how you will be supported through another week; you are poor, and yet if you be a child of God, I do know that Christ's end is answered in you; *you are rich*. No, I did not mock you when I said you were rich: I did not taunt you—you are. You are really rich; you are *rich in possessions*; you have in your

possession now things more costly than gems, more valuable than gold and silver. Silver and gold, have I none, thou mayest say; but if thou canst say afterward, “Christ is all,” thou hast outspoken all that the man can say who had piles of gold and silver. “But,” thou sayest, “I have nothing.” Man, thou hast all things. Knowest thou not what Paul said? He declares that “things present and things to come, and this world, and life and death, all are yours and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” The great machinery of providence has no wheel which does not revolve for you. The great economy of grace with all its fullness, is yours. Remember that adoption, justification, sanctification, all are yours. Thou hast everything that heart can wish in spiritual things; and thou hast everything that is necessary for this life; for you know who hath said, “having food and raiment, let us therewith be content.” You are rich; rich with true riches, and not with the riches of a dream. There are times when men by night do scrape gold and silver together, like shells upon the sea shore; but when they wake in the morning they find themselves penniless. But, yours are everlasting treasures; yours are solid riches. When the son of eternity shall have melted the rich man’s gold away, yours shall endure. A rich man has a *cistern* full of riches, but a poor saint has got a *fountain* of mercy, and he is the richest who has a fountain. Now, if my neighbor be a rich man, he may have as much wealth as ever he pleases, it is only a cistern full, it will soon be exhausted; but a Christian has a fountain that ever flows, and let him draw, draw on forever, the fountain will still keep on flowing. However large may be the stagnant pool, if it be stagnant, it is but of little worth; but the flowing stream, though it seem to be but small, needs but time, and it will have produced an immense volume of precious water. Thou art never to have a great pool of riches, they are always to keep on flowing to thee; “Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.” As old William Huntingdon says, “The Christian has a hand-basket portion. Many a man, when his daughter marries, does not give her much, but he says to her, ‘I shall send you a sack of flour one day, and so-and-so the next day, and now and then a sum of gold; and as long as I live I will always send you something.’” Says he, “She will get a great deal more than her sister, who has had a thousand pounds down. That is how my God deals with me; he gives to the rich man all at once, but to me day by day.” Ah, Egypt, thou wert rich when thy granaries were full, but those granaries might be emptied; Israel was far richer when they could not see their granaries, but only saw the manna drop from heaven, day by day. Now, Christian, that is thy portion—the portion of the fountain always flowing, and not of the cistern-full, and soon to be emptied.

But remember, O saint, that thy wealth does not all lie in thy possession just now; remember thou art rich in *promises*. Let a man be never so poor as to the metal that he hath, let him have in his possession promissory notes from rich and true men, and he says, “I have no gold in my purse, but here is a note for such-and-such a sum—I know the signature—I can trust the firm—I am rich, though I have no metal in hand.” And so the Christian can say, “If I have no riches in possession, I have the promise of them; my God hath said, ’

No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly,'—that is a promise that makes me rich. He has told me, 'My bread shall be given me, and my water shall be sure.' I can not doubt his signature, I know his word to be authentic; and as for his faithfulness, I would not so dishonor him as to think he would break his promise. No, the promise is as good as the thing itself. If it be God's promise, it is just as sure that I shall have it, as if I had it."

But then the Christian is very rich in *reversion*. When a certain old man dies that I know of, I believe that I shall be so immensely rich that I shall dwell in a place that is paved with gold, the walls of which are builded with precious stones. But, my friends, you have all got an old man to die, and when he is dead, if you are followers of Jesus, you will come in for your inheritance. You know who that old man is, he is very often spoken of in Scripture; may the old man in you die daily, and may the new man be strengthened in you. When that old man of corruption, your old nature, shall totter into its grave, then you will come in for your property. Christians are like heirs, they have not much in their minority, and they are minors now; but when they come of age, they shall have the whole of their estate. If I meet a minor, he says, "That is my property." "You can not sell it, sir; you can not lay hold of it." "No," says he, "I know I can not; but it is mine when I am one-and-twenty, I shall then have complete control; but at the same time, it is as really mine now as it ever will be. I have a legal right to it, and though my guardians take care of it for me, it is mine, not theirs." And now, Christian, in heaven there is a crown of gold which is thine to-day; it will be no more thine when thou hast it on thy head than it is now. I remember to have heard it reported that I once spoke a metaphor, and bade Christians look at all the crowns hanging in rows in heaven—very likely I did say it—but if not, I will say it now. Up, Christian, see the crowns all ready, and mark thine own; stand thou and wonder at it; see with what pearls it is bedight, and how heavy it is with gold! And that is for thy head, thy poor aching head; thy poor tortured brain shall yet have that crown for its arraying! And see that garment, it is stiff with gems, and white like snow; and that is for thee! When thy week-day garment shall be done with, this shall be the raiment of thy everlasting Sabbath. When thou hast worn out this poor body, there remaineth for thee, "A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Up to the summit, Christian, and survey thine inheritance; and when thou hast surveyed it all, when thou hast seen thy present possessions, thy promised possessions, thine entailed possessions, then remember that all these were bought by the poverty of thy Saviour! Look thou upon all thou hast, and say, "Christ bought them for me." Look thou on every promise, and see the bloodstains on it; yea, look too, on the harps and crowns of heaven, and read the bloody purchase! Remember, thou couldst never have been anything but a damned sinner, unless Christ had bought thee! Remember, if he had remained in heaven, thou wouldst for ever have remained in hell; unless he had shrouded and eclipsed his own honor, thou wouldst never have had a ray of light to shine upon thee. Therefore, bless his dear name, extol him, trace every stream to the fountain; and bless him who is the source, and

the fountain of everything thou hast. Brethren, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

IV. I have not done, I have three things now to say, and shall say them as briefly as possible.

The first is *a doctrine*; the doctrine is this: If Christ in his poverty made us rich, what will he do now that he is glorified. If the Man of Sorrows saved my soul, will the man now exalted suffer it to perish? If the dying Saviour availed for our salvation, should not the living, interceding Saviour, abundantly secure it?

“He lived, he lives and sits above,
For ever interceding there;
What shall divide us from his love,
Or what shall sink us in despair?”

If when the nail was in thine hand, O Jesus, thou didst rout all hell, canst thou be defeated now that thou hast grasped the scepter? If, when the thorn crown was put about thy brow, thou didst prostrate the dragon, canst thou be overcome and conquered now that the acclamations of angels are ascending to thee? No, my brethren, we can trust the glorified Jesus; we can repose ourselves on his bosom; if he was so strong in poverty, what must he be in riches?

The next thing was *a question*, that question was a simple one. My hearer, hast thou been made rich by Christ’s poverty? Thou sayest, “I am good enough without Christ; I want no Saviour.” Ah, thou art like her of old, who said, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, whereas, saith the Lord, ‘Thou art naked, and poor, and miserable.’” O ye that live by good works, and think that ye shall go to heaven because you are as good as others; all the merits you can ever earn yourselves, are good for nothing. All that human nature ever made, turns to a blot and a curse. If those are your riches, you are no saints. But can you say this morning, my hearers, “I am by nature without anything, and God has by the power of his Spirit taught me my nothingness.”

My brother, my sister, hast thou taken Christ to be thine all in all? Canst thou say this day, with an unfaltering tongue, “My Lord, my God, I have nothing; but thou art my all?” Come, I beseech thee, do not shirk the question. Thou art careless, heedless; answer it, then, in the negative. But when thou hast answered it, I beseech thee, beware of what thou hast said. Thou art sinful, thou feelest it. Come, I beseech thee, and lay hold on Jesus. Remember, Christ came to make those rich, that have nothing of their own. My Saviour is a physician; if you can heal yourself, he will have nothing to do with you. Remember, my Saviour came to clothe the naked. He will clothe you, if you have not a rag of your own; but unless you let him do it from head to foot, he will have nothing to do with you. Christ says he will never have a partner; he will do all, or none. Come then, hast thou given up all to Christ?

Hast thou no reliance and trust save in the cross of Jesus? Then thou hast answered the question well. Be happy, be joyous; if death should surprise thee the next hour, thou art secure. Go on thy way, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

And now I close with the third thing, which was *an exhortation*. Sinner, dost thou this morning feel thy poverty? Then look to Christ's poverty. O ye that are to-day troubled on account of sin—and there are many such here—God has not let you alone; he has been plowing your heart with the sharp plowshare of conviction; you are this day saying, "What must I do to be saved?" You would give all you have, to have an interest in Jesus Christ. Your soul is this day sore broken and tormented. O sinner, if thou wouldst find salvation, thou must find it in the veins of Jesus. Now, wipe that tear from thine eye a moment, and look here. Dost thou see him high, where the cross rears its terrible tree? There he is. Dost see him? Mark his head. See the thorn-crown, and the beaded drops still standing on his temples. Mark his eyes; they are just closing in death. Canst see the lines of agony, so desperate in woe? Dost see his hands? See the streamlets of blood flowing down them. Hark, he is about to speak. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Didst hear that, sinner? Pause a moment longer, take another survey of his person; how emaciated his body, and how sick his spirit! Look at him. But hark, he is about to speak again—"It is finished." What means he by that? He means, that he has finished thy salvation. Look thou to him, and find salvation there. Remember, to be saved, all that God wants of a penitent, is to look to Jesus. My life for this—if you will risk your all on Christ, you shall be saved. I will be Christ's bondsman to-day, to be bound for ever, if he break his promise. He has said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." It is not your hands that will save you; it must be your eyes. Look from those works whereby you hope to be saved. No longer strive to create a garment that will not hide your sin, throw away that shuttle; it is only filled with cobwebs. What garment can you weave with that? Look thou to him, and thou art saved. Never sinner looked, and was lost. Dost mark that eye there? One glance will save thee, one glance will set thee free. Dost thou say, "I am a guilty sinner?" Thy guilt is the reason why I bid thee look. Dost thou say, "I cannot look?" Oh, may God help thee to look now. Remember, Christ will not reject thee; thou mayest reject him. Remember now, there is the cup of mercy put to thy lip by the hand of Jesus. I know, if thou feelest thy need, Satan may tempt thee not to drink, but he will not prevail; thou wilt put thy lip feebly and faintly, perhaps, to it. But oh, do but sip it; and the first draught shall give thee bliss; and the deeper thou shalt drink, the more of heaven shalt thou know. Sinner, believe on Jesus Christ; hear the whole gospel preached to thee. It is written in God's Word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Hear me translate it—He that believeth and is *immersed* shall be saved. Believe thou, trust thyself on the Saviour, make a profession of thy faith in baptism, and then thou mayest rejoice in Jesus, that he hath saved thee. But remember not to make a profession till thou hast believed: remember, baptism is nothing, until thou hast faith. Remember, it is a

farce and a falsehood, until thou hast first believed; and afterwards, it is nothing but the profession of thy faith. Oh, believe that; cast thyself upon Christ, and thou art saved for ever! The Lord add his blessing, for the Saviour's sake. Amen.

Things That Accompany Salvation

A Sermon

(No. 152)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 20, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Things that accompany Salvation.”—[Hebrews 6:9](#).

I AM not quite certain that my text will warrant all I shall say upon it this day if read and understood in its connection. But I have taken the words rather by accommodation than otherwise, and shall make use of them as a kind of heading to the discourse which I hope to be enabled to deliver. I sat myself down, and I meditated on this subject—“Things that accompany Salvation.” And after some period of rumination, my thoughts assumed the form of an allegory; in which I hope to present them to you this morning. I compared Salvation to a rich and costly treasure, which God in his infinite love and mercy had determined to send into the world, and I remembered that our Lord Jesus was so much interested in the bringing of this Salvation to this earth, that he did send all that he had, and came himself to attend and to accompany this Salvation. I then pictured to myself a great march of bright ones through this land, carrying in their midst the sacred jewel of Salvation. I looked forward, and I saw a mighty van-guard, who already had attained the shores of Eternity. I looked around Salvation, and I saw it always in every case attended with divers graces and virtues which seemed to be like troops and soldiers to guard it in the ran, about its flanks, and in the rear.

Before we begin, however, let us just make this caution. When the Apostle speaks of virtues and of graces, he calls them “things that accompany Salvation,” not things which cause it. Our faith does not cause Salvation, nor our hope, nor our love, nor our good works; they are things which attend it as its guard of honor. The origin of Salvation lies alone in the sovereign will of God the Father; in the infinite efficacy of the blood of Jesus—God the Son, and in the divine influence of God the Holy Spirit. There are, however, “things that accompany Salvation.” Picture then to yourselves the march of some ancient monarch through his territory. We read stories of eastern monarchs in the olden time, that seem more like romance than reality; when they marched with thousands of flying banners and with all kinds of riches borne with them. Now you are to take that as the basis of my figure and suppose Salvation to be the sacred treasure which is being carried through the world, with guards before and guards behind, to accompany it on its journey.

We will begin, then, with *the advance-guard that has accompanied Salvation or rather gone before it*. We shall then come to *those who immediately precede it*, and then we shall

notice *those who accompany it by its side*, and conclude by noticing *the rear guard attending upon this Salvation of our God*.

I. First, then, IN THE MARCHES OF TROOPS AND ARMIES, THERE ARE SOME THAT ARE OUTRIDERS, AND GO FAR AHEAD OF THE OTHER TROOPS. So in the march of Salvation,” which have far preceded it to clear the way. I will tell you the names of these stupendous Titans who have gone before. The first is *Election*, the second is *Predestination*, the third is *Redemption* and the *Covenant* is the captain of them all. Before Salvation came into this world, Election marched in the very forefront, and it had for its work the billeting of Salvation. Election went through the world and marked the houses to which Salvation should come and the hearts in which the treasure should be deposited. Election looked through all the race man, from Adam down to the last, and marked with sacred stamp those for whom Salvation was designed. “He must needs go through Samaria,” said Election; and Salvation must go there. Then came Predestination. Predestination did not merely mark the house, but it mapped the road in which Salvation should travel to that house, Predestination ordained every step of the great army of Salvation, it ordained the time when the sinner should be brought to Christ, the manner how he should be saved, the means that should be employed; it marked the exact hour and moment, when God the Spirit should quicken the dead in sin, and when peace and pardon should be spoken through the blood of Jesus. Predestination marked the way so completely, that Salvation doth never overstep the bounds, and it is never at a loss for the road. In the everlasting decree of the Sovereign God, the footsteps of Mercy were every one of them ordained. As nothing in this world revolves by chance—as even the foreknown station of a rush by the river is as fixed as the station of a king—it was not meet that Salvation should be left to chance; and therefore God has mapped the place where it should pitch its tent, the manner of its footsteps to that tent, and the time when it should arrive there. Then came Redemption. The way was rough; and though Election had marked the house, and Predestination had mapped the road, the way was so impeded that Salvation could not travel it until it had been cleared. Forth came Redemption, it had but one weapon; that weapon was the all-victorious cross of Christ. There stood the mountains of our sins; Redemption smote them, and they split in halves and left a valley for the Lord’s redeemed to march through. There was the great gulph of God’s offended wrath; Redemption bridged it with the cross, and so left an everlasting passage by which the armies of the Lord may cross. Redemption has tunnelled every mountain; it has dried up every sea, cut down every forest; it has levelled every high hill, and filled up the valleys, so that the road of Salvation is now plain and simple. God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly.

Now, this sacred advance-guard carry for their banner the Eternal Covenant. Election, Predestination, and Redemption—the things that have gone before, beyond the sight, are all rallied to the battle by this standard—the Covenant, the Everlasting Covenant, ordered

in all things and sure. We know and believe that before the morning star startled the shades of darkness, God had covenanted with his Son that he should die and pay a ransom price, and that, on God the Father's part, he would give to Jesus "a number whom no man could number," who should be purchased by his blood, and through that blood should be most securely saved. Now, when Election marches forward, it carries the Covenant. These are chosen in the Covenant of grace. When Predestination marcheth, and when it marketh out the way of Salvation, it proclaims the Covenant. "He marked out the places of the people according to the tribes of Israel." And Redemption also, pointing to the precious blood of Christ, claims Salvation for the blood-bought ones, because the Covenant hath decreed it to be theirs.

Now, my dear hearers, this advance-guard is so far ahead that you and I cannot see them. These are true doctrines, but very mysterious; they are beyond our sight, and if we wish to see Salvation, we must not stop until we see the van-guard, because they are so far off that only the eye of faith can reach them. We must have that sacred glass, that divine telescope of faith, or else we shall never have the evidence of things not seen. Let us rest certain, however, that if we have Salvation we have Election. He that believeth is elected whoever casts himself on Christ as a guilty sinner, is certainly God's chosen child. As sure as ever you believe on the Saviour, and go to him, you were predestinated to do so from all eternity, and your faith is the great mark and evidence that you are chosen of God, and precious in his esteem. Dost thou believe? Then Election is thine. Dost thou believe? Then Predestination is as surely thine as thou art alive. Dost thou trust alone in Jesus? Then fear not, Redemption was meant for thee. So then, we will not be struck with terror at that grand advance-guard that hath already gained the celestial hill, and have prepared the place where the elect shall for ever repose upon the bosom of their God.

II. But mark, we are about to review THE ARMY THAT IMMEDIATELY PRECEDES SALVATION; and first, in the forefront of these, there marches one whose name we must pronounce with sacred awe. It is God, the Holy Spirit. Before anything can be done in our salvation, there must come that Third Person of the Sacred Trinity. Without him, faith, repentance, humility, love, are things quite impossible. Even the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot save until it has been applied to the heart by God the Holy Spirit. Before we notice the grand army, then, that immediately precedes Salvation, let us be cautious that we do not forget Him who is the leader of them all. The great King, Immortal, invisible, the Divine person, called the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit: it is he that quickens the soul, or else it would lie dead for ever; it is he that makes it tender, or else it would never feel, it is he that imparts efficacy to the Word preached, or else it could never reach further than the ear; it is he who breaks the heart, it is he who makes it whole: he, from first to last, is the great worker of Salvation in us just as Jesus Christ was the author of Salvation for us. O soul, by this mayest thou know whether Salvation has come to thine house—art thou a partaker of the Holy

Spirit? Come now, answer thou this question—hath he ever breathed on thee? Hath he ever breathed into thee? Canst thou say that thou hast been the subject of his supernatural influence? For, if not, remember except a man be born of the Spirit from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Thy best exertions will be all unavailing unless the Holy Ghost shall work in thee, to will and to do of God's good pleasure. The highest efforts of the flesh can never reach higher than the flesh, just as water of itself will never run higher than its source. You may be moral, you may be strictly upright, you may be much that is commendable, but unless you be partakers of the Holy Spirit, salvation is as impossible to you as it is even to the lost. We must be born again, and born again by that divine influence, or else it is all in vain. Remember, then, that the Spirit of God always accompanies Salvation.

And now, close in the rear of the adorable Spirit follow the Thundering Legion. No sooner does God the Holy Ghost come into the soul, than he brings with him what I have called the Thundering Legion; and those of you that have been saved will not be at a loss to understand what I mean. This Thundering Legion are clad in mail, their helmets wave with horror; their speech is rough like men that come from a far country; their faces are terrible to look upon, for they are like unto lions, and do terribly affright the timid. Some of the men in this Thundering Legion bear with them swords; with these swords they are to slay the sinner. For before he can be made whole, he must be spiritually killed, the sword must pierce him, and must slay all his selfishness before he can be brought to the Lord Jesus. Then another body of them carry with them axes, with which they cut down the thick trees of our pride and abase the goodly cedars of our righteousness. There are with them those that fill up the wells with stones, and break up all the cisterns of our carnal sufficiency, until we are driven to despair, having all our hopes despoiled. Then come those who, with brazen trumpets, or with trumps of ram's horns—like those who once razed Jericho level with the ground—do blow a blast, so shrill and dread, that the sinner thinks that even the yells of hell itself could not be more terrible. Then come those who with lances pierce the spirit through and through; and in the rear are the ten great guns, the artillery of the law, which, perpetually fire upon the wounded spirit till it knows not what it is, nor what it does. My friend, has this Thundering Legion ever come to your house? Have they ever taken up their quarters in your heart? For, rest assured, these are some of the "things that accompany Salvation." What I have said is no allegory to those who have been converted, but it may be a mystery to those who know not the Lord. Understand, then, that the first work of God the Spirit in the soul is a terrible work. Before a man can be truly converted, he must suffer great agony of spirit; all our self-righteousness must be laid level with the ground, and trampled like the miry streets. Our carnal hopes must, every one of them, be cut in pieces, and our refuges of lies must be swept away with the hail of God's anger. The law of God will appear terrible to the sinner when he is first convinced of sin. "What have I done?" he will say. Or

rather, “What have I undone? I have undone myself.” See him when God the Spirit has first convinced him of sin; you would think him mad; he is thought to be mad by his worldly companions. He weeps day and night, tears become his meat and his drink; he can scarcely sleep for the dreams of hell, and when he wakes he thinks he feels it already.” Oh, the wrath to come, the wrath to come, the wrath to come!” that seems to be ever pressing on his heart. He is like John Bunyan’s pilgrim, he has a heavy burden on his back, and he knows not how to get rid of it, he wrings his hands and cries “What shall I do? I am undone. I have rebelled against God, and God is angry with me.” Ah, I tell you this Thundering Legion is a terrible thing indeed. God be praised, when once they go out of the heart there is some joy; but whilst they are billited in the conscience of man, I defy him to eat or drink with any mirth or joy. The poor town of Mansoul is hung with black all the time these rough soldiers are there. Hideous threatenings and doleful forebodings are the sinner’s only company in such a case. He seeks to find a little hope and comfort in his own doings; down comes the hammer of the Law, and breaks all his doings to pieces. He thinks, well he will rest on the couch of Indifference and Sloth; forth comes the Law, ties him to the halberts, takes its ten-thonged whip and begins to lay on to him with all his might till his heart bleeds again. Then comes Conscience with its brine, and washes him all over; and he is exceedingly tormented, for even his bed is become a bed of spikes and thorns. This Thundering Legion always precedes Salvation. More or less of terrors every man must feel before he is converted. Some have less, some have more; but there must be some measure of this terrible law work in the soul, or else Salvation is not come to a man’s house.

Oh, Thundering Legion, ye are gone; we hear their trumpets and the dying echoes still appal us. We can remember, brethren, those terrible days when they were in our house and in our heart. They are gone. What see we in the rear of them? Close in the rear there follows a broken heart. Look at it; do not despise it, God never despises it, do not thou. “A broken and a contrite heart O God thou wilt not despise.” I see how this poor broken heart is broken; it is rent to its very eye and center; it is bathed in tears; it is overwhelmed with suffering. See its humility; it never talks about boasting now. Mark its repentance, the sins it loved before it hates now; it speaks not about self-salvation. Hear it, as the broken heart speaks out its broken language. Hear it—“Lord have mercy upon me a sinner!” Do not fear to come and look at this broken heart; how sweetly is it perfumed! The sacred smell of a sacrifice which God approves rises from it. Hear it, as again it speaks—“Lord, save, or I perish.” See this poor broken heart when it is in the world and at its business; it interrupts its business with ejaculations like these—“Oh that—Ah, ah—would that!” And when it can get alone, it pours out its heart before God, and cries,

Unclean, unclean, and full of sin
From first to last, O Lord I’ve been;
Deceitful is my heart.’

Oh wash my soul in Jesus' blood; forgive me all my guilt, and I will be thy servant for ever and ever.

Dear hearers, has this broken heart ever come to your house? Rest assured I am speaking God's own truth, that admits of no dispute—unless this broken heart has come within your bosom you cannot be made partakers of Christ. The heart must first be pounded in the mortar of conviction, and beaten in pieces with the pestle of the law, or else it never can receive the grace of the Comforter in all its plenitude. Are you broken-hearted to-day? Are you sorrowful at this very hour? Be of good cheer, Salvation is not far behind. When there is once a broken heart there is mercy very near. The broken heart is the prelude of healing. He that kills will make whole; he that woundeth will bind up; he that smote will cure. God is looking on thee with love, and will have mercy upon thee.

But who are those that follow in the rear? Another troop, another legion, but these are far different from the rest. The silken legion follow, these are not clad in steel; they have no helmets of war upon their head; they have smiling looks and countenances that are full of joy. No weapons of war in their hands; no thunders do they utter, but they speak kind words of pity, and their hands are full of benedictions. Shall I tell you who this silken legion are? There is a troop of them who take the poor wounded heart, and wash it first in blood; they sprinkle on it the sacred blood of the Atonement; and it is amazing how the poor broken heart, though faint and sick, revives at the first drop of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and when well washed in blood, another of this legion steps forward and takes it and washes it in water—for both water and blood flowed from the Saviour's heart.

“Let the water and the blood,
From thy wounded side which flow'd
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power”

And oh, what a washing it is! The heart that was once black as the coals of hell, seems white as the snow of Lebanon. When it has once been bathed in the bath of the Saviour's blood and water, oh, how pure it becomes! He who was black as the tents of Kedar becomes fair as the curtains of Solomon. Then follow those who pour oil and wine into the wounds of this poor broken heart, so that where it smarted before, the wounds begin to sing. The sacred oil and wine of the precious promise is poured into every wound; and then follow those who with downy fingers bind up the heart with the sacred liniment of Promise till it seems no longer broken, but the broken heart rejoices. The whole heart sings for gladness; for God hath restored its strength and bound up all its wounds, according to his promise: “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” And then, since the work is not quite done, there come those who carry the King's ward-robe; and with the things out of this rich storehouse they array the soul from head to foot; they clothe it with everything that for lustre and for glory could adorn it, and make it bright as the spirits before the throne.

And then the King's jewellers come in and complete the whole: they array the soul with ornaments, and bedeck it with precious stones. As the Father said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet," even so do this Silken Legion wash and heal and cleanse and glorify the once poor broken heart. Have these ever come to your house? It is an allegory, but it is all plain to him that understandeth it. Sinner, hast thou ever had the blood of Christ applied to thee?

"Couldst thou look and see the flowing
Of his soul's redeeming blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He hath made thy peace with God?"

Dost thou this hour lay thine hand on the dear head of Christ; confess thy sin, and believe that he was punished for thee? Thou canst? Then, verily salvation is thine. And has thine heart been ever washed with water? Say, dost thou hate sin? Is thy guilt all cleansed, and is the power of guilt cut away, so that thou dost not love the ways of iniquity, nor seek to run in the paths of transgressors. Then thou art an heir of heaven. And say, poor sinner, hast thou ever been arrayed in the robe of Jesus' righteousness? Couldst thou ever fondly hope that thou wast accepted in the Beloved? Methinks I see thee with the tear in thine eye, and hear thee saying, I have sometimes sung with all my heart—

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift my head.
Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through Christ I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

And now we have not yet come to a full conviction of Salvation. The Silken Legion are gone; their banners are still flying in the gale, and their trumpets of promise are still making the air glad with melody. What cometh next? Now come those that are the actual attendants upon Salvation—or rather, that march in the rank immediately before it. There are four of these, called *Repentance*, *Humility*, *Prayer* and a *tender Conscience*. Just before the full assurance of Salvation there marches *Humility*. She is of a downcast look; she is not sad, but she hath no high looks; she scarcely dares to lift her eye to the place where God's honor dwelleth. She is often looking downwards, remembering her past estate thinking of all the bitterness and the guilt of her previous life. She never boast; of what God has done for her, she looks to the hole of the pit and the miry clay from whence she was digged. She knows she has been washed in the blood of the Saviour, but she remembers how black she was before she was washed, and oh, she laments the past although she rejoices in the present. She feels her own

weakness, she dares not stand alone she leans on the arm of her Beloved, for she knows that she should fall to the ground unless he should constantly maintain her. Side by side with her, is her sister called *Repentance*, watering the ground with tears to lay the dust before the King. Wherever she goes she weeps and if you ask her why, she will tell you she does not weep because of a fear of hell—that is all gone. The Silken Legion yonder, she tells you, have wiped all her fears away; but she weeps because she smote the Lord that loved her so well she beats her breast, and cries—

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

The more you tell her of her Salvation, the more she weeps to think she could have rebelled against such a Saviour. She is confident that her sins are blotted out; she knows her Master has forgiven her; but she never will forgive herself. Then side by side with *Repentance* is one called *Prayer*. He is a priest, and he waves in his hand a censer full of odoriferous incense, that the way for the King may be prepared, that wherever he marches there may be a sweet perfume. *Prayer* riseth by midnight to call upon God, its waking eyes salute the rising sun, that it may lift up its heart to Jehovah, and when the sun is setting, *Prayer* will not let his wheel be hidden beneath the horizon, until in his chariot he hath carried supplication. Then in this company is the fourth of those immediately attending upon Salvation, *a tender Conscience*. This tender Conscience is afraid to put one foot before the other, lest it should put its foot in the wrong place. Poor tender Conscience; some despise him; but he is dear to the King’s heart. I would to God, my brethren, you and I knew more about him. I used to know a conscience so tender, that I would wish to feel it again. Then we questioned the lawfulness of every act before we committed it, and then, though it was lawful we would stop to see if it were expedient and if we thought it expedient, even then we would not do it, except we felt it would be abundantly honorable to the Lord our God. Every doctrine we used to scruple at, lest we should believe a lie; every ordinance we examined, lest we should commit idolatry; happy were the days when tender Conscience went with us. And now, my hearers, do you know anything about these four? Has *Humility* ever come to you? Has she ever abased your pride and taught you to lie in the dust before God? Has *Repentance* ever watered the floor of your hearts with tears? Have you ever been led to weep in secret for your sins, and to bewail your iniquities? Has *Prayer* ever entered your spirit? Remember, a prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Have you learned to pray, not with the parrot’s cry, but with the heart’s ever fresh expression. Have you ever learned to pray? And lastly are you *tender of Conscience*, for unless your conscience is made tender, salvation has not met you, for these are the immediate attendants upon it.

III. And now comes SALVATION IN ALL ITS FULNESS. The “things that accompany Salvation” make a glorious march in the forefront of it—from Election down to these precious opening buds of virtue in the sinner’s heart. What a goodly array! Sure the angels do sometimes fly along in admiration, and see this long array that heralds Salvation to the heart. And now comes the precious casket set with gems and jewels. It is of God-like workmanship; no hammer was ever lifted on it, it was smitten out and fashioned upon the anvil of Eternal blight, and cast in the mould of Everlasting Wisdom; but no human hand hath ever defiled it, and it is set with jewels so unutterably precious, that if heaven and earth were sold they could never buy another Salvation! And who are those that are close around it? There are three sweet sisters that always have the custody of the treasure—you know them, their names are common in Scripture—Faith, Hope, and Love, the three divine sisters; these have Salvation in their bowels and do carry it about with them in their loins. *Faith*, who layeth hold on Christ, and trusteth all in him; that ventureth everything upon his blood and sacrifice, and hath no other trust. *Hope*, that with beaming eye looks up to Jesus Christ in glory, and expects him soon to come: looks downward, and when she sees grim Death in her way, expecting that she shall pass through with victory. And thou sweet *Love*, the sweetest of the three, she whose words are music and whose eyes are stars; Love, also looks to Christ and is enamoured of him; loves him in all his offices, adores his presence, reverences his words, and is prepared to bind her body to the stake and die for him, who bound his body to the cross to die for her. Sweet Love, God hath well chosen to commit to thee the custody of the sacred work. Faith, Hope, and Love—say sinner, hast thou these three? Dost thou believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Dost thou hope that through the efficacy of his merits thou shalt see thy Maker’s face with joy? Dost thou love him? Say, couldst thou repeat after me,

“Jesus! I love thy charming name,
’Tis music to my ear;
Fain would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven might hear.
Yes, thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust;
Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust.”

Have you these three graces? If so, you have Salvation. Having that, you ere rich to all intents of bliss; for God in the Covenant is yours. Cast your eye forward; remember Election is yours, Predestination and Sovereign Decree are both yours; remember, the terrors of the law are past; the broken heart is mourning; the comforts of religion you have already received; the spiritual graces are already in the bud, you are an heir of immortality, and for you there is a glorious future. These are the “things that accompany Salvation.”

IV. Now you must have patience with me for just a few more minutes; I MUST BRING UP THE REAR GUARD. It is impossible that with such a van guard, grace should be unattended from behind. Now see those that follow Salvation. As there were fair bright cherubs that walked in front of it—you remember still their names—Humility, Repentance, Prayer, and a tender Conscience—there are four that follow it, and march in solemn pomp into the sinner’s heart. The first of these is Gratitude—always singing, “Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.” And then Gratitude lays hold upon its son’s hand; the name of that son is Obedience. “O my master, saith the hears, “thou hast done so much for me; I will obey thee”—

“Help me to run in thy commands,
’Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my heart, nor hands, nor feet,
Offend against my God.”

In company with this fair grace is one called Consecration—a pure white spirit that hath no earthliness; from its head to its foot it is all God’s, and all gold. Hear it speak—

“All that I am and all I have
Shall be for ever thine;
What e’er my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give him all.”

Linked to this bright one, is one with a face Serene and solemn, called Knowledge, “Then shall ye know when ye follow on to know the Lord.” whose that are saved understand mysteries, they know the love of Christ; they “know him, whom to know is life eternal.”

Now, have you these four? They are rather the successors of Salvation than the heralds of it. “Oh yes,” the believer can say, “I trust I have Gratitude. Obedience, Consecration, and Knowledge.” I will not weary you, but there are three shining ones that follow after these four, and I must not forget them, for they are the flower of them all. There is Zeal with eyes of fire, and heart of flame a tongue that burneth, a hand that never wearies and limbs that never tire. Zeal, that flies round the world with wings swifter than the lightning’s flash, and finds even then he-wings too tardy for her wish. Zeal, ever ready to obey, resigning up itself for Christ, jealously affected always in a good thing. This Zeal always dwells near one that is called Communion. This, sure, is the goodliest of all the train; an angel spiritualised, an angel purified and made yet more angelic, is Communion. Communion calls in secret on its God; its God in secret sees. It is conformed to the image of Jesus; walks according to his footsteps, and lays its head perpetually on his bosom. And as a necessary consequence, on

the other side of Communion—which with one hand lays hold of Zeal, is Joy—joy in the Spirit. Joy, that hath an eye more flashing than the world’s merriment ever gave to mortal beauty, with light foot trips over hills of sorrow, singing in the roughest ways, of faithfulness and love. Joy, like the nightingale, sings in the dark, and can praise God in the tempest and shout his high praises in the storm. This is indeed a fitting cherub to be in the rear of Salvation. Do not forget these other three; they are after works of the Spirit, they are high attainments—Zeal, Communion, and Joy.

Now I have almost done. Just in the rear is Perseverance, final, certain and sure. Then there follows complete Sanctification, whereby the soul is purged from every sin, and made as white and pure as God himself. Now we have come to the very rear of the army; but remember as there was an advance guard so far ahead that we could not see them, so there is a rear guard so far behind that we cannot behold them now. Let us just try to see them with the eye of faith. We have seen the army; we have traced it from the Thundering Legion, guided by the Holy Spirit, till we have finished it by complete Sanctification. Hark, I hear the silver trumpet sound; there is a glorious array behind. A guard, far, far back are coming following the steps of the conquering heroes, that have already swept our Sills away. Do you not see in the fore part there is one, whom men paint a skeleton. Look at him, he is not the King’s terrors. I know thee, Death, I know thee. Miserably men have belied thee. Thou art no spectre, thine hand bears no dart; thou art not gaunt and frightful. I know thee, thou bright cherub: thou hast not in thy hand a dart, but a golden key that unlocks the gates of Paradise. Thou art fair to look upon, thy wings are like the wings of doves, covered with silver and like yellow gold. Behold this angel Death, and his successor Resurrection. I see three bright things coming; one is called Confidence, see it! it looks at Death; no fear is in its eye, no palor on its brow. See holy Confidence marches with steady steps, the cold chill stream of Death doth not freeze its blood. See behind it its brother Victory; hear him, as he cries, “O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave where is thy victory?” The last word, “victory,” is drowned amidst the *shouts of angels*. These bring up the rear. Angels bear the spirits of the redeemed into the bosom of the Saviour—

“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,
They are for ever blest.”

And now follow everlasting songs—“Praise him, praise him, King of kings and Lord of lords; he hath gotten him the victory. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, world without end! Hallelujah, yet again!” Let the echoes of eternity perpetually cry, “Hallelujah! for”

“THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY YOUR SALVATION.”

The Mysteries of the Brazen Serpent

A Sermon

(No. 153)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 27, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”—[John 3:14](#).

WE are told by wise men that all languages are based upon figures, that the speech of men who are uncivilized is mainly composed of figures; and that indeed the language of the most civilized, when cleaved so as to bring it to its natural foundation, is based upon a set of metaphors perceived by the mind, and then used in language. This much I know, that when we would teach children to speak, we are accustomed to call things, not exactly by the names by which they are known to us, but by some name which represents, for instance, the kind of noise which is uttered by some animal; but which in some way or other, by a species of figure, is easily understood by the child to represent the things. But certain it is that among savage nations, the speech is almost entirely composed of metaphors. Hear an Indian warrior addressing the chiefs, and inflaming them for war; he gathers together all the metaphors of heaven and earth to make his speech. And you will note the same thing is true even in the names which the Indian warriors bear. Those of you who are acquainted with their nomenclature will remember, that the strangest names are given to their great men, by way of figure and metaphor to set forth the qualities of their mind.

Now, beloved, it is the same in spiritual language as it is in natural speech Nicodemus was but a child in grace: when Jesus Christ would teach him to speak concerning things of the kingdom, he did not talk to him in abstract words, but he gave him metaphorical words whereby he might understand the essence of the thing better than by giving him a mere abstract term. When he talked to Nicodemus, he did not say anything about sanctification; but he said, “Except a man be born of water.” He did not talk anything to him about the great change of the heart; but he said, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He would not tell him much about the Spirit when he began, but he said “The wind bloweth where it listeth.” And when he wanted to teach him faith he did not begin by saying, “By faith we are allied to Christ, and derive salvation from our living head;” but he said—;“Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.” And so the first religious talk of converted men must always be in figures. Not the epistles of Paul, which are pure didactic teaching, but the words of Jesus, must first be applied to the sinner, before he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and understands the mysteries of the kingdom. And I believe I have hit

upon the reason why our Master used this figure, and talked to Nicodemus with metaphor after metaphor, and figure after figure, because the root of all language must be in figures.

And now, to-day, I am about to address the mass of my congregation concerning that simple subject of faith in the Lord Jesus, whereby men are saved. And instead of addressing them in a didactic and doctrinal manner, I shall adopt the parable of my text, and endeavour to imitate the example of my Lord, in trying to make faith plain to those who are but children in grace.

Allow me, then, dear friends, to describe first, *the people in the wilderness*—the representatives of men who are sinners. Let me describe next, *the brazen serpent*—the type of Jesus Christ crucified. Let me then note what was to be *done with the brazen serpent*—it was to be lifted up; and so was Christ to be lifted up. And then let us notice what was to be *done by the people who were bitten*—they were to look at the serpent; and so sinners must believe in Christ.

I. Our first figure represents MEN IN THE ESTATE OF SIN; and the figure is borrowed from the children of Israel in the wilderness, when they were invaded by the fiery serpents. Can you imagine the horror and dismay depicted upon the countenances of the Israelites, when, for the first time, they saw themselves invaded by an army of fiery flying serpents? They had stood valiantly in fight against Amalek; but these were things that trembled not at the sword. Moses had taught them the use of the bow, as it is written in the book of Jasher, but these were things, against which the arrow could not prevail. They had endured weariness, and thirst and hunger; the sun had sometimes smitten them by day, and the frost by night, and but for God's preservation, the hardships of the wilderness would have cut them off. All these they had endured and were inured to them; but these fiery serpents were novelties; and all new terrors are terrible from their very novelty. Can you imagine how they began to tell one another of the awful visitants which they had beheld! and can you imagine how their terror spread like wildfire through the camp, and ere the rumour had spread the serpents were devouring them?

And now, dear friends, if we could all of us see our position in this world, we should this day feel as Israel did when they saw the serpents coming upon them. When our children are born into this world, we believe there is sin in them; but it is a terrible thing for us to reflect that even if the serpent had not bitten them in the birth, yet they are surrounded everywhere by innumerable evils! Can a father send his son into this wicked world with a consciousness of all the evils that will surround him, without a sense of terror? And can a Christian man trust himself to walk in the midst of this ungodly and libidinous generation, without feeling that he is surrounded with temptations, which, if he were left to himself, would be a thousand times more dangerous to him than the most destroying of serpents?

But the picture blackens; we must have deeper shades to paint it. Behold the people after they were bitten! Can you picture their writhings and contortions when the poison of the

serpent had infected their veins? We are told by the old writers that these serpents when they bit caused vehement heat, so that there was a pain throughout the body, as if a hot iron had been sent along the veins. Those who had been bitten had a great thirst; they drank incessantly, and still cried for water to quench the burnings within. It was a hot fire which was lit in the fountain, and which ran through every nerve and every sinew of the man; they were racked in pain, and died in most fearful convulsions. Now my brethren, we cannot say that sin instantly produces such an effect as this upon the men who are the subjects of it; but we do affirm, that, let sin alone, and it will develop itself in miseries far more extreme than ever the bite of the serpent could have caused. It is true the young man who quaffs the poisoned cup of intoxication, wots not that there is a serpent there; for there is no serpent except in the dregs thereof. It is sure that the woman who boasts herself of her riches, and arrays herself right gaudily in her pride, wots not that a serpent binds the zone of her waist; for there is no serpent there as she knoweth, but she shall know it when the days of her frivolity are ended. It is true he that curseth God knows not that a viper hath infused the poison which he speaks out against his Maker; but he shall know it in days to come. Look ye at a bloated drunkard; see him after years of intoxication have defaced all that was manlike in him, as he totters to his grave a poor feeble creature; the pillars of his house are shaken, his strength has failed him, and that which God had meant to be his own image hath become the image of misery incarnate! See the lascivious debauchee after his brief day of pleasure has closed!—No, it is too loathsome for me to paint; my lips refuse to depict the miseries which our hospitals see every day; the awful loathsomeness, the accursed disease which eats up the very bones of those who indulge in sin. Fiery serpents, ye are nothing when compared with fiery lusts! ye may infuse poison into the blood; but lusts do that, and do something more, for they infuse damnation into the soul! When sin has had its perfect work; when its last fair conception has been brought forth, and hath developed itself in the dire crime and the loathsome iniquity—then we have a picture which serpent-bitten Israel would not set forth to us in all its horrors!

And the shades thicken yet again; the darkness lowers, and the clouds are heavier! How awful must have been the death of those who died by the serpents! There are some deaths which are sweet to think upon. The death of the late eminent preacher, Dr. Beaumont, who died in his pulpit, was a death which all of us might envy; whose released spirit, whilst the singing of God's praise was ascending up to heaven, left his body, and was forthwith raised to the throne of God. The death of him, who having served his Master, sinks like a shock of corn fully ripe, or like a sun that hath run its race, is something to be noted and remembered with delight. But the death of the sinner, who hath been bitten by his lusts, and hath not been saved by faith in Christ—oh, how terrible! It is not in the power of mortal language to depict the horrors of the death-bed of a man who has lived without God and without Christ. I challenge all the orators that have ever lived, to draw forth from their vocabulary, words

full enough of horror and of terror to depict the departing scene of the man who has lived at enmity with God, and who dies with his conscience quickened then. Some men it is true live in sin, and take the last dregs of their infatuation before they die, and sink into the pit blindfolded, without the slightest pang of horror; but other men who have had their consciences awakened, die not so. Oh, the shrieks, the yells, the screams! oh, the face of anguish, the contortions, the misery. Have you never heard how men do bend their fists and swear they will not die; and how they start forth, and declare—"I cannot, and I must not die; I am unprepared!" Starting back from the fiery gulph they clutch the physician, and desire him, if possible, to lengthen out the thread of their existence! Ay, many a nurse has vowed that she would never nurse such a man again, for the horrors would be with her till she died.

And now, my dear hearers, you are not dying now; but you will be dying soon. None of you have taken a lease of your lives; it is impossible for you to guarantee to yourselves existence for another hour. And if you are Godless and Christless, ye have all in your veins the venom of that death unutterable which will make your departure doleful beyond expression! I would to God I could cut the cords of my stammering tongue so as to address you with vehemence and passion upon this subject. Men are dying every day around us; at this very hour there are thousands departing into the world of spirits. In upper chambers, where mourning relatives are pouring floods of tears upon their burning brows; far away on the wild sea, where the sea-gull utters the only scream over the shipwrecked mariner; down, deep, deep, deep, in the lowest valley, and high upon the loftiest hills, men are dying now, and dying in all the agonies I have sought to describe, but have failed to do. Ah, and ye must die also! and will ye march on heedlessly; will ye go on step after step, singing merrily all the way, and dreaming not of that which is to come! Oh, will ye be like the silly bullock that goeth easily to the slaughter, or will ye be like the lamb that licks the butcher's knife! Mad, mad O man, that thou shouldst go to eternal wrath and to the chambers of fell destruction, and yet no sigh comes from thy heart; no groan is uttered by thy lips! Thou diest every day, but groanest never, till the last day of thy death, which is the beginning of thy misery. Yes, the condition of the mass of men is just like the condition of the children of Israel when they were bitten by the serpents.

II. And now comes THE REMEDY. The remedy of the bitten Israelites was a brazen serpent; and the remedy for sinners is Christ crucified. "Stuff, nonsense," said some of the children of Israel, when they heard that a brazen serpent lifted up on a pole was to be the means of their cure. Many of them laughed in the jollity of unbelief—absurd, ridiculous; who ever heard of such a thing, how can it be? A serpent of brass lifted up upon a pole, to cure us of these wounds, by being looked Upon! why all the skill of the physicians cannot do it; will a glance at a brazen Serpent do it? It is impossible!" This much I know, if they did not despise the brazen serpent, there be many that despise Christ crucified. Shall I tell you what they say of him? They say of him as they did of the brazen serpent. Some Wise one

said—“ Why it was a serpent that did the mischief; how can a serpent Undo it?” Yes, and men will say, “It was by man that sin and death came into the World, and can a man be the means of our salvation?” “Ah,” says another, having the prejudice of a Jew about him, “and what a man he was! No king, no prince, no mighty conqueror; he was but a poor peasant, and he died upon a cross.” Ah, so said some in the camp; they said it was only a brazen serpent, not a golden one, and how could a brazen serpent be of any use to them? It would not sell for much if it were broken up. What was the use of it? And so men say of Christ. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and they hide their faces from him because they cannot see how he is adapted for their cure.

But some will have it that the preaching of the cross not only cannot save, but will increase the evil. Old physicians tell us that brass was the most likely thing in the world to make people die the quicker; the sight of anything that is bright would have the effect of making the poison yet more strong in its effects, so that it would be death at once to look upon brass. And yet strange to say, to look at the brazen serpent saved them. “Now,” says the infidel, “I cannot see how men are to be saved from sin by the preaching of Christ.” “Truly, sir,” he says, “you go and tell men that though they have sinned never so much, if they do but believe, their sins shall all be washed away! Why they will take advantage of that, and they will be more wicked than ever they were. You tell men that their good works are of no avail whatever, that they must rest on Christ alone!” “Why,” says the sceptic, “my dear fellow, it will be the destruction of all morality; instead of a cure, it will be a death. Why preach it?” Ah, the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it is Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. I cannot, myself, but admit, that at first sight the brazen serpent seems to be the most absurd invention, in itself, for curing those who were bitten, that ever mind of man could have invented; and yet I see in the brazen serpent, when I come to study it, the highest wisdom that even God himself could develop. I grant you that the cross of Christ also does in its outward appearance seem to be the simplicity of simplicities; something which any one might have thought of, but which would have been beneath their thought. But when you come to study and understand the marvellous scheme of God’s justice vindicated, and man pardoned through the atoning blood of the cross, I say, that not even the mighty intellect of God could have conceived a wiser plan, than the wisdom of God displayed in Christ Jesus crucified.

But remember, that much as those who heard of the brazen serpent might have despised it, yet there was no other means of cure. And, now hear me for one moment, while I tell the whole story of salvation. Men, brethren, and fathers, we are born of a sinful generation, and we have ourselves increased our guilt, for us there is no hope; do what we may, we cannot save ourselves.

“Could our zeal no respite know,
Could our tears for ever flow,

All for sin could not atone.”

But brethren, Christ Jesus, God’s eternal Son, came into this world, and was born of the virgin Mary, he lived a doleful life of misery, and at last he died a death accompanied by unutterable pangs—that was the punishment of the sins of those who, as penitents, come to Christ. If you this day so repent, and put your trust in Jesus, you have in your trust and repentance a sure proof that Christ was punished for you.

III. And now WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH THE BRAZEN SERPENT? The text says, “Moses lifted it up;” and we read he was to lift it up upon a pole. Ah, dear friends, and Christ Jesus must be lifted up. He has been lifted up; wicked men lifted him up, when, with nails on an accursed tree, they crucified him! God the Father hath lifted him up; for he hath highly exalted him, far above principalities and powers. But the minister’s business is to lift him up. There are some ministers who forget that their errand in the world is to lift up Christ. Suppose Moses, when God told him to lift up the brazen serpent, had said in himself, “It is becoming in me, before I lift it up, that I should give some explanatory remarks. And instead of lifting it up before the vulgar crowd, I will initiate a proved few, so that they may understand about it. I will arrange around this serpent a few golden cloths, I will garnish it with silver tapestry, so that it may not be looked upon by vulgar eyes, and I will endeavour to explain it to them.” Now this is what many priestly persons in this age and in ages past have tried to do. The gospel! oh, that must not be preached to the poor! “The Bible,” says the Church of Rome, “must not be read by the vulgar crowd! How can they understand it? It is a thing too sacred for the common people to see! No, wrap up the brazen serpent; wrap it up in a cloth, do not let it be exhibited.” “No,” say our Protestant ministers, many of them, “the Bible must be given, but we must never alter the translation of it!” There are some passages in the present translation that are so dark, that no man can understand them without an explanation. “But no,” say the divines of this age, “we will not have the Bible translated properly, the people must always put up with a faulty translation. The brazen serpent must be wrapped up, because it would a little unsettle matters, if we were to have a new translation!” “No,” say others, “we will have a new translation, if need be; but there are some parts of the truth that ought not to be preached!” I am not now misrepresenting some of my brethren in the ministry. I know they hold that some doctrines of God’s Word ought not to be preached—every day at least. They say Election is true; but they never mention it. They say Predestination is no doubt a godly doctrine, but it ought to be kept from the people. It must be in their creed, or else they would not be sound; but in the pulpit it must not be mentioned at all. “No,” says the Church of Rome, “if we have a brazen serpent, we will put it in the sanctum, where it cannot be seen, and we will have the smoke of incense before it, so that it shall not be plainly discerned; the pomp, and ceremony, and trappings of formality, shall shield it from the vulgar gaze of the people; we will have it girt all round with a thousand ceremonies, which will abstract the gospel, and leave the people to be content with the cere-

monies!” Now in these days there are great tendencies to that. The Puseyites are trying, instead of preaching the simplicity of the gospel, to give us figures. “Oh,” they say, “what an elevating thing is a Gothic church; how it lifts the soul to heaven to sit in a place where there is a forest of Gothic pillars! oh, what a sweet influence a well played organ has on the mind!” They tell us there is a kind of heavenly influence poured forth from vestments when well worn; and that to see the priest discharge his functions in a holy and reverent manner, is a most excellent way of impressing souls. They will have us believe that holly at Christmas time is a most heavenly and spiritual thing. They teach us that our passions will be carried to heaven by these little sprigs of green; that putting flowers now and then where the gas lamps should be, has a most extraordinary influence in carrying away our souls to paradise; that burning candles in the daylight is just the most splendid way in all the world of showing forth the sun of righteousness! Now, we do not exactly fall in with their views. We believe that these places are good for children; they are not so liable to cry there, for there are more things to amuse them. But we never could see how a man—who was a man—could ever sit down to a thing so infamously namby-pamby as the religion of a Puseyite. There is nothing in it but pure nonsense, and all that the gospel may not be seen. It is as if Aaron had filled his censer full of incense and waved it before the brazen serpent, and made a great smoke, so that the people could not see; and then poor Moses tarried behind and tried to look, but none of the poor souls could see because there was the smoke before them. No, the only thing we have to do with Christ Jesus crucified is, just to lift him up and preach him. There is many a man who could only speak in a ploughman’s dialect, who will wear a bright and starry crown in heaven, because he lifted Christ up, and sinners saw and lived. And there is many a learned doctor, who spoke with the brogue of the Egyptian, and, with dark and mysterious language, he talked he knew not what, ‘who, after having ended his course, shall enter heaven without a solitary star in his crown, never having lifted up Christ, nor won crowns for his Master. Let each of us who are called to the solemn work of the ministry remember, that we are not called to lift up doctrine, or church governments, or particular denominations; our business is to lift up Christ Jesus and to preach him fully. There may be times when church government is to be discussed, and peculiar doctrines are to be vindicated. God forbid that we should silence any part of truth: but the main work of the ministry—its every day work—is just exhibiting Christ. and crying out to sinners, “Believe, believe, believe on him who is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.”

And let it be remembered, that if the minister doth but preach Christ plainly, that is all he has to do; if with affection and prayer he preaches Christ fully, if there were never a soul saved—which I believe would be impossible—he would have done his work, and his Master would say, “Well done.” I have gone away from this hall, after preaching upon divers doctrines, and though many have complimented me, foolishly, I have said to myself, “I can but groan that I had such a subject at all.” And at another time, when I have been faltering in

my delivery, and committed a thousand blunders in my speech, I have gone away as happy as a prince, because I have said, "I did preach Christ." There was enough for sinners to be saved by; and if all the papers in the world should abuse me, and all the men in the world should say 'cry him down;' he will still live and still breathe as long as he feels in himself, "I have preached to sinners, and Christ has been preached to them, so as they could understand and lay hold on him and be saved."

IV. And now, dear friends, I have almost concluded; but I have come to that part of the discourse which needs most of power. WHAT WERE ISRAEL TO DO? What are convinced sinners to do? The Israelites were to look; the convinced sinner must believe. Do you picture Moses with his reverend head standing erect, and boldly crying out with all his might—"Look, look, look!" Do you see him, as with his right hand he grasps the pole, and lifts it up, and marches with it through the camp like a great standard-bearer, pointing with his finger, and speaking with hand, and eye, and lip, and foot, and every part of the body, as he passionately bids poor bitten Israel to look? You can, perhaps, conceive the scene as men roll over one another, and the dying and almost dead behold the brazen serpent. and begin to live. Now note, there may be some in the camp who would not look; they obstinately shut their eyes, and when the pole was brought near them they would not look. Perhaps it was through unbelief; they said, "What was the use of it? it could do them no good!" There is the wretch, the pole is before him, and yet he will not look. Well what will become of him? Oh, the death-pangs are upon him; see how death is twitching him! How his flesh seems to writhe in agony! He has shut his eyes with all the force and passion he can command, lest they should be opened on that brazen serpent, and he should live I Ah! my hearer, and I have such an one here to-day. I have many here who will not come to Christ that they may be saved—men, who when the gospel is preached to them resist it, despise it, and reject it. Though the reception of the gospel be all of grace, yet the rejection of it is all of man. And I have some here who have often been touched in their conscience; they have often been moved to believe, but they have been desperately set on mischief, and they would not come to Christ. Ah, sinner, thou little knowest how direful thy doom shall be. Thou mayest this day tell me thou dost not believe on the Saviour; thou mayest turn away thine ear from the warning, and say, "What need to make so great a noise about it? I would rather die than believe; for I do not think that Christ can save! What good is there in it?" Ah, sir, you may reject me; but remember there is a greater preacher than I am coming to you soon. He with a skeleton arm, and bony finger, and cold speech, he will freeze, and yet convince! It is one called Death! Look me in the face to-day; and tell me I preach you a lie—you can do that easily! Look death in the face to-morrow, and tell him that, and you will find it harder work. Ay, and if you have the fool-hardiness to do that, you will not look at the face of the Great Judge, when he shall sit upon the throne, and tell him that his gospel was not true; for affrighted and alarmed, you shall rush hither and thither to hide yourselves from the face of

him that sitteth upon the throne. Perhaps there were some in the camp who said they would look by-and-by. "Oh," said they, "there is no need to look now; the venom has not yet worked its effects: we are not yet dead; a little longer!" And ere they uttered the last word they were stiff and clay-cold! How many do the same? They will not be religious yet; another day, another hour. They believe they can be pious when they like, which is a fallacy; and therefore they will postpone the matter as long as they may. How many have postponed the day of salvation, until the day of damnation has come, before they had repented! Oh, how many have said, "A little sleep, a little folding of the hands!" and they have been like men on shipboard, when the ship was foundering, who would not escape while they might, but still tarried on deck; at last a sea swallowed them, and they went down alive into the depths. Take heed of procrastination; delays are dangerous, and some delays are damnable! Look hither, look hither to Christ bleeding on cross. Look now, for the Spirit saith, "*to-day*: if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation."

I doubt not, there were some there who tried physicians: "Look at the brazen serpent?" said they, "not we. Doctor, come hither, bring your balsam; can you not take the caustic and burn out this poison from my arm, and then pour in some cordial that will save me? Physician, have you no antidote that might cool my blood? Ah. I laugh at that brazen serpent; I will not look at it; I trust to your skill. O learned physician!" And how many now do the same? They say, "I will not believe in Christ; I will try and do better; I will reform myself, I will attend to all the ceremonies of the church. Can I not help myself, and so improve myself that I shall have no need of Jesus?" Ah, ye may try; ye may lay that flattering unction to your souls, and film the ulcerous wound, but all the while dark corruption shall sleep within, and shall at last break out in sore flames upon thee; when thou shalt have no time to attempt a cure, but shalt be swept away—not to the hospital of mercy, but like the leper, without the city, thou shalt be cast away from hope of blessedness.

It may be there were some who were so busy looking at their sores, that they did not think of looking at the serpent. Poor creatures, they lay in their misery, and kept looking first at that wound on the foot, and then at that one on the hand; and crying over their sores, and never looked at the serpent. Scores and hundreds perish in that way. ' Oh," says the sinner, "I have been so sinful!" Man, what has that to do with it? Christ is all meritorious, look at him. "No, no," says another, "I cannot look at Christ. Oh, sir, you do not know what crimes I have committed; I have been a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I have been a whore-monger, or what not; how can I be saved!" My dear man, your wounds have nothing to do with it: it is just Christ on the cross. If any poor creature, bitten by the serpent, had said to me—" Now it is no good my looking there; see how often I have been bitten; there is a huge serpent twisting round my loins, there is another devouring my hand, how can I live?" I should say to him, "My dear fellow, do not take any notice whether you have got one serpent or fifty serpents, one bite or fifty bites; all you have to do is to look. You have

nothing to do with these bites, except that you have to feel them, and perish by them unless you look. But just look straight to Christ.” And now thou chief of sinners, believe in the Lord Jesus; and be thy sins never so many, he is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God by him. And yet how many perish through those divers delusions, with the gospel before their very eyes, lifted up on the pole so plainly that we wonder they do not see it.

And now I must tell you one or two sweet things for the encouragement of the poor sinner. Oh, you that are guilty this morning, and know that you are so, let me say to you, “Look to Christ.” For remember the brazen serpent was lifted up, that every one in the camp who was bitten might live; and now Christ is lifted up to you, that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Sinner, the devil says you are shut out; tell him that “whosoever” shuts out none. Oh that precious word, “whosoever.” Poor soul, I see thee clutch at it and say, “Then, Sir, if I believe, he will not cast me away.” I see the harlot in all her guilt bemoaning her iniquity; she says it is impossible that Christ should save. But she hears it said, “Whosoever,” and she looks and lives! Remember, it mattered not how old they were, nor how much bitten they were, nor whereabouts in the camp they lived; they did but look and live. And now ye that have grown grey in iniquity, whose hairs might rather be black than white, if they showed forth your character, for it has been blackened by years of vice. Remember there is the same Christ for big sinners as for little sinners; the same Christ for grey heads as for babes; the same Christ for poor as for rich; the same Christ for chimney sweeps as for monarchs; the same Christ for prostitutes as for saints: “Whosoever.” I use broad words that I may take a broad range, and sweep the whole universe of sinners through—whosoever looketh to Christ shall live. And remember it does not say that if they looked but little they should not live. Perhaps there was some of them so bitten that their eyelids were swollen and they could scarcely see. Old Christopher Ness says, “There may have been some of them that had so little sight that they could but squint from one eye.” Says he, in his strange language, “If they did but dart a little glance at the brazen serpent, they lived.” And you who say you cannot believe; if God gives you only half a grain of faith, that will carry you to heaven. If you can only say, “O Lord, I would believe, help thou mine unbelief;” if you can but put out your hand with Simon Peter, and say, “Lord save, or I perish,” it is enough. If you can only pray that poor publican’s prayer—“ God be merciful to me a sinner,” that will do. And if you cannot sing with some of the old experienced saints—

“My name from the palms of his hands,
Eternity cannot erase;
remember it is quite enough, if you can only sing—
“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know

I must for ever die.”

And now poor soul I have almost done. But I cannot let thee go. I see thee with the tear in thine eye; I hear thee confessing thy guilt, and bemoaning thy sin; I bid thee look to my Master and live. Be not afraid to try my Lord and Master. I know what thy bashfulness is; I have felt the same, and thought he never would save me. Come soul, thou art in secret now with thyself; for though there be thou sands around thee, thou thinkest I am speaking alone to thee. And so I am. My brother, my sister, you are weeping to-day on account of sin—look to Jesus. And for your encouragement note these three things. Note first that Jesus Christ was put on the cross on purpose for you to look at. The only reason why he died, was that poor sinners might look at him and be saved. Now, my dear brethren, if that was Christ’s purpose in being hung on the tree, you need not think you may not do it. If God sends a river, and sends it for us to drink of, will you disappoint him in not drinking? No, rather you will say. “Did he design me to drink it? Then will I drink it.” Now, Jesus hung on the cross on purpose to be looked at. Look at him, look at him, and live. Remember again for your encouragement, he asks you to look; he invites you to believe; he has sent his minister this day, even to command you to do it; he has said to me, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” Now I need not simply say that my Master’s door is wide open for you; I will say something more: he has told me to ask you to come in. Wisdom crieth aloud, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she inviteth you; she saith, “My oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come ye to the supper.” Yea, my Master has given instructions to his Holy Spirit that if men will not come of themselves, he should compel them to come in that his house may be filled. Then, poor sinner, you must be welcome, he will have enough sinners to fill his table; and if he has made you feel your sinnership—come and welcome, sinner, come. And my last encouragement is this: Come to my Master and try him, because he promises to save you. The promises of Jesus Christ are all of them as good as oaths; they never fail. He says—“Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Now, if I had here a man who declared himself to be the vilest wretch on earth, I would say to him—Young man, I am very fond of proving the truthfulness of God’s promises; now God says, if you believe you shall not perish. My dear friend, when a common sinner tries, and it does not fail, it is some proof of its truthfulness: but you are an extraordinary sinner. Now, thou extraordinary sinner, venture thyself on this promise; he says thou shalt not perish; come and try him. And remember, God must undeify himself, and cease to be true, before he can ever damn a sinner who has believed in Christ. Come risk it, thou who art so laden with sin that thou staggerest under thy burden; fall down on the simple promise, “He is able to save to the uttermost.” Just cast thyself wholly on Christ, and if thou art not saved, God’s book is a lie, and God himself has broken his truth. But that cannot be. Come thou and try it. “Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Fast-Day Service

(No. 154-55)

Held at the

CRYSTAL PALACE, SYDENHAM,

On Wednesday, October 7th, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON,

Being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a Solemn Fast, Humiliation, and Prayer before Almighty God: in order to obtain Pardon of our Sins, and for imploring His Blessing and Assistance on our Arms for the Restoration of Tranquillity in India.

BRIEF INVOCATION.

O GOD, the God of heaven and of earth, we do this day pay Thee reverence, and meekly bow our heads in adoration before Thine awful throne. We are the creatures of Thine hand; Thou hast made us, and not we ourselves. It is but just and right that we should pay unto Thee our adoration. O God I we are met together in a vast congregation for a purpose which demands all the power of piety, and all the strength of prayer. Send down Thy Spirit upon Thy servant, that he, whilst trembling in weakness, may be made strong to preach Thy Word, to lead forth this people in holy prayer, and to help them in that humiliation for which this day is set apart. Come, O God, we beseech Thee; bow our hearts before Thee; instead of sackcloth and ashes give us true repentance, and hearts meekly reverent; instead of the outward guise, to which some pay their only homage, give us the *inward spirit*; and may we really pray, really humiliate ourselves, and really tremble before the Most High God. Sanctify this service; make it useful unto us and honorable to Thyself. And O Thou dread Supreme, unto Thee shall be the glory and the honor, world without end. Amen.

Let us now praise God by singing the first Hymn. I shall read it through; and then, perhaps, you will be kind enough to sing it through.

BEFORE Jehovah's awful throng,

Ye nations bow with sacred joy;

Know that the Lord is God alone;

He can create and he destroy.

His sovereign power, without our aid,

made us of clay and form'd us men!

And when like wand'ring sheep, we stray'd,

He brought us to his fold again.

We are his people, we his care,

Our souls and all our mortal frame;

What lasting honors shall we rear,

Almighty Maker to thy name?

We'll crowd thy gates with thankful songs,
High as the heavens our voices raise;
And earth with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise.
Wide as the world is thy command;
Vast as eternity thy love;
Firm as a rock thy truth must stand,
When rolling years shall cease to move.

EXPOSITION.

DANIEL 9:1-19.

"In the first year of Darius the Son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

"In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

"And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

"We have sinned, and have committed, iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

"Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

"O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

"O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him."

There is the first bright star which shines in the midst of the darkness of our sins. God is merciful. He is just—as just as if he were not merciful. He is merciful—as merciful as if he were not just, and in very deed more merciful than if he were too lenient; instead of blending a wise severity of justice with a gracious clemency of long-suffering. My brethren, we should rejoice that we have not this day to address the gods of the heathens. You have not to-day to bow down before the thundering Jove; you need not come before implacable

deities, who delight in the blood of their creatures, or rather, of the creatures whom it is pretended that they have made. Our God delights in mercy, and in the deliverance of Britain from its ills. God will be as much pleased as Britain; yea, when Britain shall have forgotten it, and only the page of history shall record his mercies, God will still remember what he did for us in this day of our straits and our difficulties. As to the hope that he will help us it is a certainty. There is no fear that when we unite in prayer God will refuse to hear. It is as sure as that there is a God, that God will hear us; and if we ask him aright, the day shall come when the world shall see what Britain's God has done, and how he has heard her cry, and answered the voice of her supplications.

“Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

“Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

“And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under this whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

“As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn front our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

“Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

“And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.”

The prophet in his prayer pleads what God has done for them, as the reason why he should make bare his arm; he tells how God delivered Israel out of Egypt; and he therefore prays that God would deliver them from their present trouble. And, my brethren, not Israel itself could boast a nobler history than we, measuring it by God's bounties. We have not yet forgotten an armada scattered before the breath of heaven, scattered upon the angry deep as a trophy of what God can do to protect his favored Isle. We have not yet forgotten a fifth of November, wherein God discovered divers plots that were formed against our religion and our commonwealth. We have not yet lost the old men, whose tales of even the victories in war are still a frequent story. We remember how God swept before our armies the man who thought to make the world his dominion, who designed to cast his shoe over Britain, and make it a dependency of his kingdom. God wrought for us; he wrought with us; and he will continue to do so. He hath not left his people, and he will not leave us, but he will be with us even to the end. Cradle of liberty! Refuge of distress! Storms may rage around thee,

but not upon thee, nor shall all the wrath and fury of men destroy thee, for God hath pitched his tabernacle in thy midst, and his saints are the salt in the midst of thee.

“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

“Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake.

“O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

“O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.”

And now for a few moments let us endeavor to pray:—

PRAYER

OUR Father, which art in heaven,” we will be brief, but we will be earnest if Thou wilt help us. We have a case to spread before Thee this day. We will tell out our story, and we will pray that Thou wouldst forgive the weakness of the words in which it shall be delivered, and hear us, for Jesus’ sake. O Father, Thou hast smitten this our land, not in itself, but in one of its dependencies. Thou hast allowed a mutinous spirit to break out in our armies, and Thou hast suffered men who know not Thee, who fear neither God nor man, to do deeds for which earth may well blush, and for which we, as men, desire to cover our faces before Thee. O Lord God, Thou couldst not bear the sin of Sodom; we are sure Thou canst not endure the sin which has been committed in India. Thou didst rain hell out of heaven upon the cities of the plain. The cities of Inde are not less vile than they, for they have committed lust and cruelty, and have much sinned against the Lord. Remember this, O God of Heaven.

But, O Lord our God, we are not here to be the accusers of our fellow-mall; we are here to pray that Thou wouldst remove the scourge which this great wickedness has brought upon us. Look down from heaven, O God, and behold this day the slaughtered thousands of our countrymen. Behold the wives, the daughters of Britain, violated, defiled! Behold her sons, cut in pieces and tormented in a manner which earth hath not beheld before. O God, free us, we beseech Thee, from this awful scourge! Give strength to our soldiers to execute upon the criminals the sentence which justice dictates; and then, by Thy strong arm, and by Thy terrible might, do Thou prevent a repetition of so fearful an outrage.

We pray Thee, remember this day the widow and the fatherless children; think Thou of those who are this day distressed even to the uttermost. Guide the hearts of this great multitude, that they may liberally give and this day bestow of their substance to their poor

destitute brethren. Remember especially our soldiers, now fighting in that land. God shield them! Be Thou a covert from the heat! Wilt Thou be pleased to mitigate all the rig ours of the climate for them! Lead them on to battle; cheer their hearts; bid them remember that they are not warriors merely, but executioners; and may they go with steady tramp to the battle, believing that God wills it that they should utterly destroy the enemy, who have not only defied Britain, but thus defiled themselves amongst men.

But, O Lord, it is ours this day to humble ourselves before Thee. We are a sinful nation; we confess the sins of our governors and our own particular iniquities. For all our rebellions and transgressions, O God have mercy upon us! We plead the blood of Jesus. Help every one of us to repent of sin, to fly to Christ for refuge and grant that each one of us may thus hide ourselves in the rock, till the calamity be overpass, knowing that God will not desert them that put their trust in Jesus. Thy servant is overwhelmed this day; his heart is melted like wax in the midst of him; he knoweth not how to pray. Yet Lord if Thou canst hear a groaning heart which cannot utter itself in words, thou hearest his strong impassioned cry, in which the people join. Lord save us! Lord arise and bless us; and let the might of Thine arm and the majesty of Thy strength be now revealed in the midst of this land, and throughout those countries which are in our dominion God save the Queen! A thousand blessings on her much-loved head! God preserve our country! May every movement that promotes liberty and progress be accelerated, and may everything be done in our midst, which can shield us from the discontent of the masses, and can protect the masses from the oppression of the few. Bless England, O our God. "Shine, mighty God, on Britain shine;" and make her still glorious Britain, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Lord accept our confessions; hear our prayers, and answer us by Thy Holy Spirit! Help Thy servant to preach to us; and all the glory shall be unto Thee, O Father, to Thee, O Son, and Thee, O Holy Spirit; world without end. Amen and Amen.

Let us now sing the second hymn. It is made up of verses selected from different psalms, which I thought to be appropriate to the occasion

OUR God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.
Under the shadow of thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.
Our foes insult us, but our hope
In thy compassion lies
This thought shall bear our spirits up,

That God will not despise.
In vain the sons of Satan boast
Of armies in array;
When God has first despised their host,
They fall an easy prey.
Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

Hoping to receive help from God's Holy Spirit, I shall now proceed to address you from a part of the 9th verse of the 6th chapter of Micah:—

SERMON.

“Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.”—Micah 6:9.

THIS world is not the place of punishment for sin; not *the* place; it may sometimes be *a* place, but not usually. It is very customary among religious people, to talk of every accident which happens to men in the indulgence of sin, as if it were a judgment. The upsetting of a boat upon a river on a Sunday is assuredly understood to be a judgment for the sin of Sabbath-breaking. In the accidental fall of a house, in which persons were engaged in any unlawful occupation, the inference is at once drawn that the house fell because they were wicked. Now, however some religionists may hope to impress the people by such childish stories as those, I, for one, forswear them all. I believe what my Master says is true, when he declared, concerning the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, that they were not sinners above all the sinners that were upon the face of the earth. They were sinners; there is no doubt about it; but the falling of the wall was not occasioned by their sin, nor was their premature death the consequence of their excessive wickedness. Let me, however, guard this declaration, for there are many who carry this doctrine to an extreme. Because God does not usually visit each particular offense in this life upon the transgressor, men are apt to deny altogether the doctrine of judgments. But here they are mistaken. I feel persuaded that there are such things as national judgments, national chastisements for national sins—great blows from the rod of God, which every wise man must acknowledge to be, either a punishment of sin committed, or a monition to warn us to a sense of the consequences of sins, leading us by God's grace to humiliate ourselves, and repent of our sin.

O, my friends, what a rod is that which has just fallen upon our country! My poor words will fall infinitely short of the fearful tale of misery and woe which must be told before you can know how smartly God hath smitten, and how sternly he hath chidden us. We have to-day to mourn over revolted subjects, for to-day a part of our fellow-countrymen are in open arms against our government. That, of itself, were a heavy blow. Happily the government of this land is so constituted that we know little of revolutions except by name; but the

horrors of anarchy, the terrors of a government shaken to its foundations, are so great, that should I preach alone upon that subject, you might hear the rod, and cry aloud beneath its strokes. But this is as but the letting forth of water. A flood succeedeth. The men that have revolted were our subjects, and I challenge all the world to deny what I am going to say: they were our subjects rightly. Whatever the inhabitants of India might be (and undoubtedly that people have grave faults to find with us), the Sepoys had voluntarily given themselves up to our dominion, they had themselves taken oaths of fealty to Her Majesty and their officers, and they have no cause to murmur if they are made to endure the sentence uttered by a government of which they were the sworn and willing supporters. They were always petted, always dandled upon the knee of favoritism. Their revolt is not the revolt of a nation. If India had revolted, history might perhaps have taught us that she had patriots in her midst, who were delivering her from a tyrannical nation; but in the present case it is only men who are impelled by a lust and ambition for empire, who have risen against us. And, ah I my friends, what crimes have they committed! Not to-day shall I detail their acts of debauchery, bloodshed, and worse than bestiality—this tongue will not venture to utter what they have dared to do. Ye would rise from your seats and hiss me from the pulpit which I now occupy, if I should but dare to hint at the crimes which have been done of them, not in secret, but in the very streets of their cities.

And, again, equally as painful, we have now rebels to be executed. I look upon every gallows as a fearful chastisement. I regard every gibbet as being a dreadful visitation upon our land; and I think that whenever the arm of the ruler is outstretched for the punishment of death, it must always be looked upon by the country as a serious affliction to it. Just as the father thinks it a high affliction to chastise his child, so should a country ever esteem it to be a visitation when they have to punish, especially with the punishment of death. Now, these men must be punished; both heaven and earth demand it. I am no soldier, I love not war; I do not believe that this is a war at all, in the proper sense of the term. We are not fighting with enemies; our troops are going forth against revolted subjects—against men who, by their crimes, by their murder, and by other unmentionable sins, have incurred the punishment of death; and as the arrest of a murderer by authority of the law is not war, so the arrest of Indian Sepoys, and their utter destruction is not war—it is what earth demands, and what I believe God sanctions. But it is a horrible necessity. It is a dreadful thing to think of taking away the lives of our fellow-subjects; we must look upon *it* as being an affliction: and, to-day, amongst the other evils that we bemoan, we must bemoan this—that the sword must be taken out of its sheath, to cut off our fellow-subjects by their thousands. The rod, *the rod*, THE ROD hath indeed fallen heavily; no mortal tongue can tell the anguish it hath caused, nor perhaps can we yet dream where its ill effects shall end.

Remember, however, the words of my text. It is a rod; but it is an *appointed* rod. Every deed that has been done against us has been appointed by God. God is most fully to be

cleared from the sin of it, but it is undoubtedly true that he has overruled and permitted it. The rod was ordained of God. I myself see God everywhere. I believe that “the foreknown station of a rush by the river is as fixed as the station of a king, and the chaff from the hand of the winnowing as steered as the stars in their courses.” And I see God in this war. The wheels of providence may revolve in a mysterious manner, but I am certain that wisdom is the axle upon which they revolve, so that at last it shall be seen that God, who ordained the rod, only permitted it that greater good might follow, and that his name might be exalted through the earth. The sin is man’s own deed, but the affliction that we suffer through it, God hath ordained. Let us bow before it, and let us now hearken to the exhortation of the text—“Hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it.”

I shall have your attention whilst as briefly as I can I endeavor to bid you hear this rod of God.

First, let me remark, it would have been as well if we had heard this rod BEFORE IT FELL upon us. God’s rod by the wise man may be heard before it smiteth. He that understandeth God’s moral government, knows that sin carries punishment in its bowels. A wise man believing revelation, could have prophesied that God would visit us. The sins of the government of India have been black and deep. He who has heard the shrieks of tormented natives, who has heard the well-provoked cursing of dethroned princes, might have prophesied that it would not be long before God would unsheath his sword to avenge the oppressed. With regard to India itself, I am no apologist for our dominion there; with regard to the Sepoys, they are our voluntary subjects, they deserve the utmost rigour of the law. From their own oath they were our subjects; and if they have revolted let them suffer the punishment of their treason. But had it been the Indian nation that had revolted, I would have prayed God that they might have been brought under British rule again, for the sake of civilization, but I would not have preached a crusade against them, lest haply we should have been smiting patriots who were but delivering an oppressed country. My brethren, I say it would have been as well if the rod had been heard before it fell. If in the midst of sin the Indian government had paused, and endeavored to undo the evil, it would have been well for them—if instead of following the policy of creed they had followed the policy of right, they might have looked for divine support. They never ought to have tolerated the religion of the Hindoos at all. I believe myself (for it in no way infringes the law of right) entitled to my religion; but if my religion consisted in bestiality, infanticide, and murder, I should have no right to my religion, unless I were prepared to be hanged for it. Now, the religion of the Hindoos is neither more nor less than a mass of the rankest filth that ever imagination could have conceived. The gods they worship are not entitled to the least atom of respect. Had they given a decent character to their demons, we might have tolerated their idolatry; but when their worship necessitates everything that is evil, not religion, but morality must put it down. I do not believe that in this land there ever ought to have been any toler-

ation for the Agapemone, a place of lust and abomination, where sin is committed before which God's sun might blush, never ought to be tolerated. Any religion that does not infringe upon morality is beyond the force of legislature. But when once religious teachers teach immorality, and when once a religion compels men to sin, down with it; no toleration to it. It is impossible that there should be any quarter strewn to vice, even though embellished with the name of religion. If it be any man's religion to blow my brains out, I shall not tolerate it. If it be any man's religion to meet me as the Thugs do, and garotte me, and murder me, I shall not tolerate his Thugism. If it be a man's religion to commit bestial acts in public, I for one would touch his conscience, but believing that he has none, I would touch him somewhere else. Such a religion as the religion of the Hindoo, the Indian Government were bound, as in the sight of God, to put down with all the strength of their hand. But they have allowed it, in some cases they have even aided and abetted their filthy deeds; and now God visits them; and, I repeat, it would have been well if they had heard the rod before it fell; they might have perhaps avoided all this evil, and certainly they would have avoided the remorse which some of them must feel in having thus brought it upon themselves.

But it *has* fallen. The rod has smitten; the scourge has ploughed deep furrows upon India's back. What then? "Hear ye the rod" that has fallen. Now, it is an opinion published by authority—and who am I, that I should dispute the great authorities of England?—that one part of the reason for this dreadful visitation, is the sin of the people of England themselves. We are exhorted this day to humble ourselves for sin. Granting me that as being a truth—and mark, I am not the originator of it; it is in the Proclamation—who am I, that I should dispute such a high authority as that?—it is our sin that has brought it us, so they say—what, then, are our sins? Now, I will be honest with you—as honest as I can, and I will try and tell you. What are the most glaring sins for which, if it be true that God is now punishing us, are the most likely to have brought this visitation upon us?

First, there are sins in the community that never ought to have been allowed. O Britain, weep for deeds which thy governors have not yet strength of mind to stop. We have long been allowing the infamous nuisances of Holywell-street; bless God they are pretty well done for! But now what do I see every night? If I return from preaching in the country, in the Haymarket and in Regent-street, what stares me before my eyes? If there be a crime for which God will visit England, it is the sin of allowing infamy to walk before our eyes thus publicly. I do not know whose fault it is—some say it is the fault of the police: it is somebody's fault, that I do know, and against that somebody I do now most solemnly protest. It is a most fearful thing that those who are honest and moral cannot walk the streets, without being insulted by sin in the robes of the harlot. My voice perhaps this day may reach some who have power to repeat this protest powerfully and successfully. I see before me gentlemen who are the representatives of the press. I believe they will do their duty in that matter; and if they will sting as some of them can sting, right sharply, they perhaps may be able to sting

a little virtue into some of our governors, and that will be a good thing. But I do protest that this has been one of the causes why God has visited us, if indeed our sins have brought this evil upon us, as I verily believe. Look ye too, men and brethren, at some of those amusements of yours, in which ye are wont to indulge. God forbid I should deny you those of your amusements which are innocent, but I must maintain that they should be always moral; when we know that lords and ladies of the land, have sat in playhouses, and listened to plays that were a long way from decent, it is time that some voice should be lifted up against them. These are glaring sins. I am not raking now for private faults; we have had these things before our eyes, and there have been some that have dared to protest against them long ago. I say, these sins of the community in part have brought the rod upon us.

But, my friends, I am inclined to think that our *class sins* are the most grievous. Behold this day the sins of the rich. How are the poor oppressed! How are the needy down-trodden! In many a place the average wage of men is far below their value to their masters. In this age there is many a great man who looks upon his fellows as only stepping-stones to wealth. He builds a factory as he would make a cauldron. He is about to make a brew for his own wealth. "Pitch him in." He is only a poor clerk, he can live on a hundred a year. *Put him in!* There is a poor time-keeper: he has a large family; it does not matter; a man can be had for less: *in with him!* Here are the tens, the hundreds, and the thousands that must do the work. *Put them in;* heap the fire; boil the cauldron; stir them up; never mind their cries. The hire of the laborers kept back may go up to heaven: it does not matter, the millions of gold are safe. The law of demand and supply is with us, who is he that would interfere? Who shall dare to prevent the grinding of the faces of the poor? Cotton-lords and great masters ought to have power to do what they like with the people: ought they not? "Ah! but ye great men of the earth, there is a God, and that God has said he executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. And yet the sempstress in her garret, and yet the tailor in his den, and yet the artizan in his crowded factory, and yet the servants who earn your wealth, who have to groan under your oppression, shall get the ear of God, and he will visit you. "Hear ye the rod." It is for this the rod falleth on you.

Mark, again, the sins of merchants. Was there ever an age when the merchants of England had more fallen from their integrity? The mass of them, I believe, are honest to the core; but I do not know who among them are so. We can trust none in these times. Ye heap up your companies, and ye delude your myriads; ye gather the money of fools; ye scatter it to the winds of heaven, and when the poor call upon you ye tell them it is gone: but where? O! England, thou wast once true, upright, honest; men could not rightly call thee, then, "Perfidious Albion;" but now, O Britain, alas! for thee! Unless thou dost recover thyself, who can trust thee? God will visit the nation for this, and it shall be seen that this alone is one of the things which God would have us hear, when we hear the rod.

There are many of you that are poor. I saw you smile when I spoke to the rich. I will have at you also. If we are to humble ourselves this day as a nation, ye have cause also to humble. Ah, my God, what multitudes there are of men who deserve but little of their employers, for they are eye-servers, men-pleasers, and do not with singleness of heart serve the Lord. Were men better workmen, their masters would be better. There are hundreds of you that are here to-day who are the best hands in all the world to prop up walls, when you ought to be busy at your own work—who, when your time is bought and paid for, steal it for something else. And how many there are in what are called the lower ranks—and God forgive the man that invented that word, for we are none of us lower than the other before the Judge of all the earth—how many are there that do not know what it is to look up to God, and say, “Though he has made me a servant, I will discharge my duty, and I will serve my master and serve my God with all my might.” Many are the sins of the poor. Humble yourselves with the rich; bow your heads and weep for your iniquities; for these things God doth visit us, and ye should hear the rod.

It is impossible for me to-day to enter into all the sins of illiberality, of deceit, of bigotry, of lasciviousness, of carnality, of pride, of covetousness, and of laziness which infest this land. I have tried to indicate some of the chief, and I pray God humble us all for them.

And now, “Hear ye the rod.” O church of God, the rod has fallen, and *the church* ought to hear it. I am afraid that it is the church that has been the greatest sinner. Do I mean by “the church” that established by law? No, I mean the Christian church as a body. *We*, I believe, have been remiss in our duty; for many and many a year pulpits never condescended to men of low estate. Our ministers were great and haughty; they understood the polish of rhetoric, they had all the grandeur of logic; to the people they were blind guides and dumb dogs, for the people knew not what they said, neither did they regard them. The churches themselves slumbered; they wrapped themselves in a shroud of orthodoxy, and they slept right on; and, whilst Satan was devouring the world, and taking his prey, the church sat still, and said, “Who is my neighbor?” and did not arouse herself to serve her God. I do hope that we have already seen the beginning of a revival. The last year has seen more preaching than any year since the days of the apostles. We are stirring in ragged schools, and in various efforts for doing good; but still the church is only half awake; I fear she still slumbers. O church of God! awake I awake I awake! for verily the rod has fallen for thy sake. “Hear thou the rod, and him that hath appointed it.”

We have had many rods, friends; we have had many great afflictions, and we did bear them for a time; and now I close my sermon by saying, “Hear ye the rod, when the rod SHALL AGAIN BE STILL.” We trust that in a little while our soldiers will carve us out peace and victory with their triumphant swords; we trust that, perhaps this very day a great fight is being fought, and a great victory being won. I seem to hear to-day the shout of the triumphant warrior; I think I hear the trump of victory even now. The hour of prayer is often

the hour of deliverance. At any rate, we hope that ere long this black cloud will be overblown, and then I fear you will all forget it. You will pray to-day: will you pray when victory comes? You will buy some fireworks, will you not? That is how you will thank God! You had a victory over a potent enemy, and peace was established: your votive offerings consisted of rockets and illuminations—grand offerings to the Dread Supreme! If a heathen were here he would say, “Their God is the God of humiliation, not the God of victory: their God is a God of trouble, certainly not the God of blessings, for they forget him when they receive deliverance.” I remember, when last time the cholera swept through your streets, ye hurried to your churches, and ye prayed; terror sat upon your countenances, and many of you cried aloud for deliverance. It came. What did you do? Alas! for your piety! It was as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it passed away. It will be so again. It is but as the lashing of the water; it is smitten, but it soon recovers itself, and all marks are effaced. It is so with this land; I fear it is so with each of us to a degree. How often have you and I been laid upon our beds with cholera, or with fever, or with some other disease which threatened to take us away! We prayed; we sent for the minister; we devoted ourselves to God; we vowed, if he would spare us, we would live better. Here thou art, my hearer, just what thou wast before thy sickness. Thou hast forgotten thy vow; but *God hath not forgotten it*. Thy resolutions were filed in heaven, and in the day of judgment God shall take them forth, and say, “Here is one solemn covenant broken; here is another vow forgotten, another resolution made in sickness broken after recovery!” I do think that to-day will be a most solemn mockery if our humiliation ends to-day. With some of you it will not even begin to-day, and, therefore, it will not end, for it is not begun. But the mass who will pray to-day, will they pray in a week? Not they; they will go their way, to heap again the faggots of their sins upon the pile of vengeance, and still stand by and weep, because the fire is burning, the fire which they themselves have kindled. Oh! my hearers, permit me to charge home to your hearts; and would God that he would make the charge of my language against your consciences as heavy as the charge of British soldiery against the enemy! How many of you have been awakened, convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement! How many times have you vowed you would repent! How many times have you declared that you did hear the rod, and that you would turn to God! And yet you have been liars to the Almighty; you have defrauded the Most High; and whilst the bill is due it still stands dishonored. Tremble! God may smite you yet; and if to-day you are despisers of Christ, remember, you have no guarantee that you will be in this world another hour. You may before this sun is set stand before your Maker’s bar. What then? what then? what then? To perish for ever is no light matter; to be cast into the flames of hell is no little consideration. “Turn ye, turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel!” Repent! “The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” And remember that when he gives repentance and faith he has appended the blessing to them. “Jesus Christ of the seed of David” was nailed to a cross; he

died that we might not die, and to every believer heaven's gate is open, to every penitent the path to paradise is free. Sinner I dost thou believe? If so, Christ hath blotted out thy sin. Be happy! Soul! dost thou repent? Thou art safe. God has helped thee to repent, and inasmuch as he hath done that, he hath proved that he loves thee.

Oh! if I might but have some souls won to Christ to-day, what would I give? What is all this great gathering to me? It is an extra labor, that is all. For this I do not labor. God is my witness, I sought you not; never once have I said a thing to court a smile from any man. When God first sent me to the ministry he bade me fear no man, and I have not yet met the man to whom I have feared to tell of God's truth. Nor you have I sought to please, nor you have I sought to gather here. I would preach the gospel; may God give me some souls as my reward! And if but one poor sinner shall look to Jesus, clap your wings, ye angels! enough is done, for God is honored.

I have done my sermon, but I want to make an appeal to you to give liberally.

Lives there a man in England who will this day refuse his help to those of his countrymen who have suffered? No; there does not live such a man—not such a Briton. Is there a miserable miscreant without a heart, who will, when God has given him enough, shut up his bowels of compassion against those whose sons and daughters have been murdered, and who themselves have escaped as by the skin of their *teeth*? No, I will not slander you by such a supposition. I cannot think that I have such a monster here. When the box shall pass round, give—give as you can afford; if it be a penny, let the working man give. You that are rich must not give pence, however. Many a man has said, "There is my mite." He was worth a hundred thousand pounds, and it was not a mite at all; if he had given a thousand it would only have been a mite to him. Give as ye can afford it; may God be pleased to grant a liberal spirit.

The following Chorus was then sung—

GLORY, honor, praise, and power,
Be unto the Lamb for ever;
Jesus Christ is our Redeemer,
Hallelujah, Amen.

After which, the benediction having been pronounced, the service terminated.

There were upwards of 24,000 persons present at this service; and the amount collected towards the Indian Relief Fund amounted to nearly £500, of which £25 was given by Miss Nightingale. The Crystal Palace Company contributed £200 in addition—making a total of nearly £700.

"To God be all the glory."

Fear Not

A Sermon

(No. 156)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 4, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy redeemer the Holy one of Israel.” —[Isaiah 41:14](#).

I SHALL SPEAK this morning to those that are discouraged, depressed in spirit, and sore troubled in the Christian life. There are certain nights of exceeding great darkness, through which the spirit has to grope in much pain and misery, and during which much of the comfort of the Word is particularly needed. Those seasons occur in this manner. Frequently they occur at the outset of a religious life. A young man, deeply impressed under the ministry, has been led to feel the weight of sin; he trusts also he has been led to look for salvation to the Christ who is preached in the gospel. In the young ardor of his spirit he devotes himself wholly to Christ; with the most solemn vows he dedicates body, soul, time, talents, all that he has, to the great work of serving God; he thinks it easy to fulfill his vow; he doth not count the cost; he reckons it will be easy to forsake gay companions, to renounce old established habits, and to become a Christian. Alas! before many days he finds out his mistake, if he did not reckon without his host he certainly reckoned without his heart, for his evil heart of unbelief had deceived him, he knew not how hard would be the struggle, and how desperate the wrestling between his old evil nature and the new-born principle of grace within him. He finds it to be like the rending off of right arms to give up old and cherished habits; he discovers it to be painful to renounce his former pursuits, as painful as it would be to pluck out his right eye. He sits down then, and he says, “If this be the trouble at the outset what may I expect as I proceed. O my soul, thou wast too fast in dedicating thyself to God; thou hast undertaken a warfare which thy prowess can never accomplish; thou hast started on a journey for which thy strength is not adequate; let me again return unto the world;” and if the Spirit saith, “Nay, thou canst not,” then the poor soul sits itself down in deep misery, and cries, “I can not go back and I can not go forward; what must I do? I am exceedingly discouraged because of the way.” The same feeling often overcomes the most valiant Christian veteran. He who has been long experienced in the things of the divine life will sometimes be over taken with a dark night and a stormy tempest; so dark will be the night, that he will not know his right hand from his left, and so horrible the tempest, that he can not hear the sweet words of his Master, saying, “Fear not, I am with thee.” Periodical tornadoes and hurricanes will sweep o’er the Christian; he will be subjected to as many trials in his spirit as trials in his flesh. This much I know, if it be not so with all

of you it is so with me. I have to speak to-day to myself; and whilst I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and down-hearted, I shall be preaching, I trust to myself, for I need something which shall cheer my heart—Why I can not tell, wherefore I do not know, but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; my soul is cast down within me, I feel as if I had rather die than live; all that God hath done by me seems to be forgotten, and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down with the thought of that which is to come. I need your prayers; I need God's Holy Spirit; and I felt that I could not preach to-day, unless I should preach in such a way as to encourage you and to encourage myself in the good work and labor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a precious promise to the young Christian, or to the old Christian attacked by lowness of spirits and distress of mind! "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer the Holy One of Israel. Christian brethren, there are some in this congregation, I hope many, who have solemnly devoted themselves to the cause and service of the Lord Jesus Christ: let them hear, then, the preparation which is necessary for this service set forth in the word of our text. First, *before we can do any great things for Christ there must be a sense of weakness*: "Worm Jacob." Secondly, *there must be trust in promised strength*; and thirdly, *there must be fear removed by that promise*: "Fear not, for I will help thee."

I. In the first place, the first qualification for serving God with any amount of success, and for doing God's work well and triumphantly, is A SENSE OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS. When God's warrior marches forth to battle with plumed helmet, and with mail about his loins, strong in his own majesty— when he says, "I know that I shall conquer, my own right arm and my mighty sword shall get unto me the victory, defeat is not far distant. God will not go forth with that man who goeth forth in his own strength. He who reckoneth on victory having first calculated his own might, has reckoned wrongly, for "it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." They that go forth to fight, boasting that they can do it, shall return with their banners trailed in the dust, and with their armor stained with defeat; for God will not go forth with the man who goeth forth in his own strength. God hath said it; men must serve him, they must serve him in his own way, and they must serve him in his own strength too, or he will never accept their service. That which man doth, unaided by divine strength, God never can accept. The mere fruits of the earth he casteth away; he will only have that, the seed of which was sown from heaven, sprinkled in the heart, and harvested by the sun of grace. There must be a consciousness of weakness, before there can be any victory.

I think I hear many saying to-day, "Well, sir, if that be a qualification for doing much, I have it to a very large extent." Well, do not marvel, do not wonder. Depend on this: God will empty out all that thou hast before he will ever put his own into thee; he will first empty out all thy granaries, before he will fill them with the finest of the wheat. The river of God

is full of water; but there is not one drop of it that takes its rise in earthly springs. God will have no strength used in his own battles but the strength which he himself imparts, and I would not have you that are now distressed in the least discouraged by it. Your emptiness is but the preparation for your being filled, and your casting down is but the making ready for your lifting up.

Are there others of you that would almost desire to be cast down that they might be prepared to serve God? Let me tell you, then, how you can promote in yourself a sense of your own nothingness. The text addresses us as worms. Now, the mere rationalist, the man who boasts of the dignity of human nature, will never subscribe his name to such a title as this. "Worm," says he, "I am no worm: I am a man; a man is the most glorious thing that God has made; I am not going to be called a worm; I am a man—I can do anything; I want not your revelations; they may be fit for children, for men of childish minds that only learn by believing: I am a man: I can think out truth; I will make my own Bible, fashion my own ladder, and mount on it to heaven, if there be a heaven, or make a heaven, if that be all, and dwell in it myself." Not so, however, he who is wise and understandeth; he knows that he is a worm, and he knows it in this way:

First, he knows it by *contemplation*. He that thinks, will always think himself little. Men who have no brains are always great men; but those who think, must think their pride down—if God is with them in their thinking. Lift up now your eyes, behold the heavens, the work of God's fingers; behold the sun guided in his daily march; go ye forth at midnight, and behold the heavens; consider the stars and the moon; look ye upon these works of God's hands, and if ye be men of sense, and your souls are attuned to the high music of the spheres, ye will say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" My God! when I survey the boundless fields of ether, and see those ponderous orbs rolling therein—when I consider how vast are thy dominions—so wide that an angel's wing might flap to all eternity and never reach a boundary—I marvel that thou shouldst look on insects so obscure as man. I have taken to myself the microscope and seen the ephemera upon the leaf, and I have called him small. I will not call him so again; with me he is great, if I put myself in comparison with God. I am so little that I shrink into nothingness when I behold the Almightyness of Jehovah—so little, that the difference between the animalculae and man dwindles into nothing, when compared with the infinite chasm between God and man. Let your mind rove upon the great doctrines of the Godhead; consider the existence of God from before the foundations of the world; behold Him who is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty; let your soul comprehend as much as it can of the Infinite, and grasp as much as possible of the Eternal, and I am sure if you have minds at all, they will shrink with awe. The tall archangel bows himself before his Master's throne, and we shall cast ourselves into the lowest dust when we feel what base nothings, what insignificant specks

we are when compared with our all-adorable Creator. Labor, O soul, to know thy nothingness, and learn it by *contemplating God's greatness*.

Again, if you want to know your own nothingness, consider *what you are in suffering*. I was thinking, the other evening, how small a matter it must be with God to cast any man into the most unutterable agony. We are well and in good spirits; we know not why, but it seems as if God's finger had touched one nerve, but one poor nerve, and we are so miserable that we could sit down and weep; we do not know how to bear ourselves. But half an hour ago we could have "smiled at Satan's rage, and faced a frowning world;" and God does but put his hand on our hearts, and just let one of the strings run loose, and what discord there is in our spirits; we are annoyed at the slightest matter; we wish to be continually alone; the very promises yield us no comfort; our days are nights, and our nights are black as Gehenna. We know not how to endure ourselves. How easily, then, can God cast us into misery! O man, what a little thing thou art, if so little a thing can overthrow thee. Ye have heard men talk big words when they have been prosperous; did you ever hear them talk so when they were in deep distress, and great anguish and sorrow? No, then they say, "Am I a seal or a whale, that thou settest a watch upon me? What am I, that thou shouldst visit me every morning, and chasten me every night? Let me alone, until I swallow down my spittle. Why am I sore vexed? What am I, that thou shouldst make me a butt for thine arrows, and a target for thy wrath? Spare me, O my God, for I am less than nothing; I am but a shadow that passeth away and declineth. Oh deal not hardly with thy servant, for thy mercies' sake." Great sorrow will always make a man think little of himself, if God blesseth it to him.

Again: if you would know your own weakness, *try some great labor for Christ*. I can understand how some minister who preaches to his hundred-and-fifty on a Sabbath-day, and regards himself as having a large congregation, should be very precise about the color of his cravat, and about the respect that is paid to his dignity in his little church; I can well comprehend how he should be as big as my Lord Archbishop—because he does nothing; he has nothing at all to try him; but I can not imagine Martin Luther standing before the Diet at Worms, being proud because he had to do such a deed as that. I can not conceive John Calvin, in his incessant labors for Christ, leading on the reformation, and teaching the truth of God with power, saying to himself, "Lo! this great Babylon that I have builded." I can suppose the man that has nothing to do and that is doing nothing, sitting down in devout complacency with his own adorable self; but I can not conceive, if you nerve yourselves to great labors, but what you will have to say, "Lord, what a worm am I that thou shouldst call me to such work as this!" Turn, if you please, to the history of all men who have done great deeds for God, and you will find them saying, "I marvel that God should use me thus!" "This day my mind was exceedingly cast down," says one of them, "for God had called me to a great labor, and I never felt so much of my own insufficiency as I did to-day." Says another, "I have to-morrow to do such-and-such an eminent service for my Master, and I can say

that when I was in my low estate, I was often exalted above measure, but this day my God has cast me into the lowest depths at the recollection of the work for which he has engaged me.” Go and do something, some of you, and I will be bound to say it will be the means of pricking that fair bubble of your pride, and letting some of it blow away. If you would understand what is meant by being a worm, go and do what the 15th verse says the worm should do—go and thrash the mountains, and beat them small; make the hills as chaff fanned by the wind, scatter them, and then rejoice in God: and if you can do that,

“The more God’s glories strike your eyes,
The humbler you will lie.”

Devout contemplation, sharp suffering, hard labor—all these will teach us what little creatures we are. Oh! may God by all means and every means keep us, well understanding and knowing that we are nothing more and nothing better than worms!

How easy it is, my brethren, for you and I to fly up! How hard to keep down! That demon of pride was born with us, and it will not die one hour before us. It is so woven into the very warp and woof of our nature, that till we are wrapped in our winding-sheets we shall never hear the last of it. If any man telleth me that he is humble, I know him to be profoundly proud; and if any man will not acknowledge this truth, that he is desperately inclined to self-exaltation, let him know that his denial of this truth is the best proof of it. Do you know what is the sweetest flattery in all the world? It is that flattery that Caesar’s courtiers of old gave to him, when they said Caesar hated flattery, being then most highly flattered. We do not hate flattery, any one of us; we all like it. We do not like it if it is labeled flattery; but we like it if it is given in a little underhand fashion, We all love praise.

“The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,
The modest shun it, but to make it sure.”

We all love it, every soul of us, and it is right and meet that we should all bow before God, and acknowledge that pride which is woven into our nature, and ask him to teach us what little things we are, that we may claim this promise—“Fear not, thou worm Jacob.”

II. Now the next point. Before devoting ourselves to Christ, or doing any great labor for the Saviour, it is necessary THERE SHOULD BE TRUST IN THE PROMISED STRENGTH. “I Will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” It is a certain fact, that though men be worms, they do what worms never could do; although men be nothing they do accomplish deeds which need even the power of the Infinite to rival them. How shall we account for this? Certainly it is not the worms; it must be some secret energy which gives them might. The mystery is unravelled in the text. “I will help thee, saith the Lord.” In ancient history there is a story told of a valiant captain whose banner was always foremost in the fight, whose sword was dreaded by his enemies, for it was the herald of slaughter and of victory. His monarch once demanded of him that he should send this potent sword to him to be examined. The monarch took the sword, quietly criticised it, and sent

it back with this message—"I see nothing wonderful in the sword; I can not understand why any man should be afraid of it." The captain sent back in the most respectful manner a message of this kind: "Your Majesty has been pleased to examine the sword, but I did not send the arm that wielded it; if you had examined that, and the heart that guided the arm, you would have understood the mystery." And now we look at men, and see what men have done, and we say, "I can not understand this; how was it done?" "Why, we are only seeing the sword; if we could see the heart of infinite love that guided that man in his onward course, we should not wonder that he, as God's sword, gained the victory. Now, the Christian may remember, that little though he be, God is with him; God will help him, and that right early. Brethren, I like a man who, when he begins to do anything, is afraid of himself, and says, "It is of no use; I can not do it." Let him alone: he will do it. He is all right. The man who says, "Oh there is nothing in it, I can do it," will break down to a dead certainty. But let him begin, by saying, "I know what I am at, and I feel confident I can not do it unless I have something more given to me than I feel to-day;" that man will come back with flying banners, the trumpets proclaiming that he has been victorious. But it must be because he puts reliance upon help promised. Now, Christian, I see you this morning ready to run away from the battle; you have been so dispirited this last week, through divers adverse circumstances, that you are ready to give up your religion. Now, man, here is a brother comrade that is passing through just the same; he comes here this morning, half inclined to run off to Tarshish, like Jonah did of old, only he could not find a boat, or else he might have sailed away; and he has come here to pat you on the shoulder and say, "Brother, do not let you and I play deserters, after all; let us up to arms, and still fight for our Master; for the promise says, "I will help thee, Brother, what an all-sufficient promise that is—"I will help thee." Why, it matters not what God has given us to do; if he helps us we can do it. Give me God to help me, and I will split the world in halves, and shiver it till it shall be smaller than the dust of the threshing floor; ay, and if God be with me, this breath could blow whole worlds about, as the child bloweth a bubble. There is no saying what man can do when God is with him. Give God to a man, and he can do all things. Put God into a man's arm, and he may have only the jawbone of an ass to fight with, but he will lay the Philistines in heaps: put God into a man's hand, and he may have a giant to deal with, and nothing hut a sling and a stone; but he will lodge the stone in the giant's brow before long; put God into a man's eye, and he will flash defiance on kings and princes; put God into a man's lip, and he will speak right honestly, though his death should be the wages of his speech. There is no fear of a man who has got God with him, he is all-sufficient; there is nothing beyond his power. And my brethren, what an opportune help God's is! God's help always comes in at the right time. We are often making a fuss because God does not help us when we do not want to be helped. "O!" says one, "I do not think that I could die for Christ; I feel I could not; I wish I felt that I had strength enough to die." Well, you just won't feel that, because you are not

going to die, and God will not give you strength to die with, to lay up till the dying time comes. Wait till ye are dying, and then he will give you strength to die. "O!" says another, "I wish I felt as strong in prayer as so-and-so." But you do not want much strength in prayer, and you shall not have it. You shall have what you want, and you shall have it when you want it; but you shall not have it before. Ah, I have often cried to God and desired that I might feel happy before I began to preach—that I might feel I could preach to the people. I could never get it at all. And yet sometimes God hath been pleased to cheer me as I have gone along, and given me strength that has been equal to my day. So it must be with you. God will come in when you want him—not one minute before, nor yet one minute later. "I will help thee." I will help thee when thou needest help! And oh! brethren, what an ennobling thing it is to be helped by God! To be helped by a fellow man is no disgrace, but it is no honor; but to be helped by God, what an honor that is! When the Christian prophet preacheth his Master's word, and feels that he has girded about his loins the belt of the Almighty, to strengthen him for his days work, that he may not fear the people, what a noble being he is then! When the Christian philanthropist goes into the prison, in the midst of reeking disease and death, and feels that God has put the wing of the angel over him, to shield him in the day of pestilence, how it ennobleth and honors him to have God with him! To have his strength girding his loins and nerving his arm, is just the highest thing to which man can attain. I thought but yesterday, "O, if I were a cherub I would stand with wings outstretched, and I would bless God for opportunities for serving him;" but I thought within myself, "I have an opportunity of serving God, but I am too weak for it. O my God, I wish thou hadst not put the load on me." And then it struck me, "Do the cherubim and seraphim ever say that?" Do they ever for a moment say, 'I have not strength enough to do it!'" No, if a cherub had a work to do which was beyond his might, he would meekly bow his head and say, "My Lord; I fly, I fly! He that commanded the deed will enable me to perform it." And so must the Christian say; "My God, dost thou command? It is enough: 'tis done. Thou never didst send us to a warfare at our own charges, and thou wilt never do so; thou wilt help us, and be with us to the end."

Before we can do much, then, we must *know our own weakness; and believe God's strength.*

III. And now comes the last point, upon which I shall be brief. We must, then, LABOR TO GET RID, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, OF FEAR. The prophet says, "Fear not;" thou art a worm, but do not fear; God will help thee; why shouldst thou fear? Let us labor to get rid of fear, when we are not certain we are serving our Master. And let these be our reasons:

Get rid of fear, *because fear is painful.* How it torments the spirit! When the Christian trusts, he is happy; when he doubts, he is miserable. When the believer looks to his Master and relies upon him, he can sing; when he doubts his Master, he can only groan. What miserable wretches the most faithful Christians are when they once begin doubting and

fearing! It is a trade I never like to meddle with, because it never pays the expenses, and never brings in any profit—the trade of doubting. Why, the soul is broken in pieces, lanced, pricked with knives, dissolved, racked, pained. It knoweth not how to exist when it gives way to fear. Up, Christian! thou art of a sorrowful countenance; up, and chase thy fears. Why wouldst thou be for ever groaning in thy dungeon? Why should the Giant Despair for ever beat thee with his crabtree cudgel? Up! drive him away! touch the key of the promises; be of good cheer! Fear never helped thee yet, and it never will.

Fear, too, is *weakening*. Make a man afraid—he will run at his own shadow; make a man brave, and he will stand before an army and overcome them. He will never do much good in the world who is afraid of men. The fear of God bringeth blessings, but the fear of men bringeth a snare, and such a snare that many feet have been tripped by it. No man shall be faithful to God, if he is fearful of man; no man shall find his arm sufficient for him, and his might equal to his emergencies unless he can confidently believe, and quietly wait. We must not fear; for fear is weakening.

Again; we must not fear; for fear *dishonors God*. Doubt the Eternal, distrust the Omnipotent? O, traitorous fear! thickest thou that the arm which piled the heavens, and sustains the pillars of the earth shall ever be palsied? Shall the brow which eternal ages have rolled over without scathing it, at last be furrowed by old age? What! shall the Eternal fail thee? Shall the faithful Promiser break his oath? Thou dishonorest God, O unbelief! Get thee hence! God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind; leave off doubting him, and begin to trust him, for in so doing, thou wilt put a crown on his head, but in doubting him thou dost trample his crown beneath thy feet.

And lastly, doubt not the Lord, O Christian; for in so doing *thou dost lower thyself*. The more thou believest, the greater thou art; but the more thou doubttest, the less thou becomest. It was said of the worlds conqueror, that when he was sick, he puled like a child. “Give me some drink,” cried one, like a sick girl, it was said to his dishonor. And is it not to the dishonor of a Christian, who lives in secret on his God, and professes to trust alone in him, that he can not trust him; that a little child will overcome his faith? O, poor cockle-shell boat, that is upset by a rain-drop! O poor puny Christian that is overcome by every straw, that stumbles at every stone! Then, Christian men, behave like men! It is childish to doubt; it is manhood glory to trust. Plant your foot upon the immoveable Rock of Ages; lift your eye to heaven; scorn the world; never play craven; bend your fist in the world’s face, and bid defiance to it and hell, and you are a man, and noble. But crouch, and cringe, and dread, and doubt, and you have lost your Christian dignity and are no longer what you should be. You do not honor God. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob; I will help thee, saith the Lord.” Then why shouldst thou fear?

I feel that my voice fails me, and with it my very powers of thought too, and therefore I can only turn to my comrades in arms, in the good war of Christ, and I say to them,

brethren, you and I can do nothing of ourselves; we are poor puny things; but let us attempt great things, for God is with us; let us dare great things, for God will not leave us. Remember what he has done aforetime; and remember what he has done of old he will do again. Remember David the shepherd-boy. Think ye well of Shamgar, with his ox-goad. Forget ye not the jawbone of the ass, and the stone from the sling. If these worked wonders, why should not we? If little things have done great things, let us try to do great things also. You know not, ye atoms, but that your destiny is sublime. Try and make it so by faith; and the least of you may be mighty through the strength of God. O for grace to trust God, and there is no telling what ye can do. Worms, ye are nothing, but ye have eaten princes; worms ye are nothing, but ye have devoured the roots of cedars, and laid them level with the earth; worms, ye are nothing, but ye have piled rocks in the deep, deep sea, and wrecked mighty navies; worms, ye have eaten through the keel of the proudest ship that ever sailed the ocean. If ye have done this yourselves, what can not we do? your strength lies in your mouths; our strength lies in ours too. We will use our mouths in prayer, and in constant adoration, and we shall conquer yet, for God is with us, and victory is sure.

Ye trembling souls! dismiss your fears;
Be mercy all your theme:
Mercy, which, like a river, flows
In one continued stream.
Fear not the powers of earth and hell;
God will these powers restrain;
His mighty arm their rage repel,
And make their efforts vain.
Fear not the want of outward good;
He will for his provide,
Grant them supplies of daily food,
And all they need beside.
Fear not that he will e'er forsake,
Or leave his work undone;
He's faithful to his promises—
And faithful to his Son.
Fear not the terrors of the grave,
Or death's tremendous sting;
He will from endless wrath preserve—
To endless glory bring.

Thy Redeemer

A Sermon

(No. 157)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, October 4, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“And thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”—[Isaiah 41:14](#).

AND WHY DOES it say, “and thy Redeemer?” What was the use of appending the Redeemers name to this precious exhortation? By God’s help it shall be the business of this evening to show why there is a peculiar blessedness in the fact that God hath not only said, “I will help thee, saith the Lord,” but has added, “and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

You will please to notice that it looks as if this were a repetition by three different persons. Israel was cast down, and Jehovah, for that is the first word—(you will notice that the word “Lord” is in capitals, and should be translated “Jehovah”)—says to his poor, tried, desponding servant, “I will help thee.” No sooner is that uttered than we think we shall not be straining the text if we surmise that God the Holy Spirit, the Holy One of Israel, adds his solemn affidavit also; and declares by oath and covenant, “I will help thee.” Does not this, we say, look somewhat like repetition? Was it not sufficient that Jehovah the Father should declare that he would help his people! Why did the other persons of the divine Trinity unite in this solemn declaration? We think we shall be able, if God shall help us, to show great usefulness therein, especially dwelling to-night upon that word, “thy Redeemer,” and marking how the repetition of the word by our Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, adds a peculiar blessedness to the exhortation—“Fear not, thou worm Jacob.”

First, methinks this was added *for amplification*; secondly *for sweetness*; thirdly, *for confirmation*.

I. First, when it says, “and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,” it was added FOR AMPLIFICATION. There are some preachers from whom you will never learn anything; not because they do not say much which is instructive, but because they just mention the instructive thought once, and immediately pass on to another thought, never expanding upon the second thought, but immediately passing on, almost without connection, to a third—just casting forth, as it were, bare thoughts, without opening them up, and explaining them to the people. Such preachers are generally complained of as being very unprofitable to the hearers. “Why,” said the hearer, “it made no impression upon me; it was good, but there was so much of it that I could not recollect it. I had nothing to bring away.” Other preachers, on the other hand, follow a better method. Having given one idea, they endeavor to amplify it, so that their hearers, if they are not able to receive the idea in the abstract, at least are able to lay hold upon some of its points, when they come to the amplification of it.

Now, God, the great Author of the great book, God, the preacher of the truth by his prophets, when he would preach it, and when he would write it, so amplifies a fact, so extends a truth, and enlarges upon a doctrine, says, "I will help thee, saith Jehovah." That means Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "Ah! but," said God, "my people will forget that, unless I amplify the thought; so I will even break it up; I will remind them of my Trinity. They understand my Unity; I will bid them recollect that there are Three in One, though these Three be One;" and he adds, "thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Jehovah—Redeemer—Holy One of Israel—three persons, all included, indeed, in the word Jehovah, but very likely to be forgotten unless they had been distinctly enumerated.

Now, brethren, suffer your thoughts for a moment to enlarge upon the fact, that the promise contained in this verse, "Fear not, I will help thee" (*I will help thee*), is a promise from Three Divine Persons. Hear Jehovah, the everlasting Father, saying, "I will help them." "Mine are the ages: before the ages began, when there were no worlds, when nought had been created, from everlasting I am thy God. I am the God of election, the God of the decree, the God of the covenant; by my strength I did set fast the mountains, by my skill I laid the pillars of the earth; and the beams of the firmament of heaven; I spread out the skies as a curtain, and as a tent for man to dwell in; I the Lord made all these things. 'I will help thee.'" Then comes Jehovah the Son. "And I, also, am thy Redeemer, I am eternal; my name is wisdom. I was with God, when there were no depths, before he had digged the rivers, I was there as one brought up with him. I am Jesus, the God of ages; I am Jesus, the man of sorrows; 'I am he that liveth and was dead, I am alive for evermore.' I am the High Priest of your profession, the Intercessor before the throne, the Representative of my people. I have power with God. 'I will help thee.'" Poor worm, thy Redeemer vows to help thee; by his bleeding hands he covenants to give thee aid. And then in comes the Holy Spirit. "And I," saith the Spirit, "am also God—not an influence, but a person—I, eternal and everlasting, co-existent with the Father and the Son—I, who did brood over chaos, when as yet the world was not brought into form and fashion, and did sow the earth with the seeds of life when I did brood over it,—I, that brought again from the dead your Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep, who am the Eternal Spirit, by whose power the Lord Jesus did arise from the thralldom of his tomb—I, by whom souls are quickened, by whom the elect are called out of darkness into light—I, who have the power to maintain my children and preserve them to the end—'I will help thee.'" Now, soul, gather up these three, and dost thou want more help than they can afford? What! dost thou need more strength than the omnipotence of the United Trinity? Dost thou want more wisdom than exists in the Father, more love than displays itself in the Son, and more power than is manifest in the influences of the Spirit? Bring hither thine empty pitcher! Sure this well will fill it. Haste! gather up thy wants, and bring them here—thine emptiness, thy woes, thy needs. Behold, this river of God is full for thy supply. What canst thou want beside? Stand up, Christian, in this thy might Jehovah Father, Jehovah

Jesus, Jehovah Spirit,—these are with thee to help thee. This is the first thing. It is an *amplification*.

II. And now, secondly, concerning that word, “thy Redeemer,” it is a SWEETENING OF THE PROMISE. Did you never notice that a promise always seems all the sweeter for having Jesus in it? All the promises are yea and amen in him; but when a promise mentions the name of the Redeemer, it imparts a peculiar blessedness to it. Brethren, it is something like, if I may represent it by such a figure, the beautiful effect of certain decorations of stained glass. There are some persons whose eyes are so weak that the light seems to be injurious to them, especially the red rays of the sun, and a glass has been invented, which rejects the rays that are injurious, and allows only those to pass which are softened and modified to the weakness of the eye. It seems as if the Lord Jesus were some such a glass as this. The grace of God the Trinity, shining through the man Christ Jesus, becomes a mellow, soft light, so that mortal eye can bear it. My God, I could not drink from thy well, if thou hadst not put there the earthen pitcher of my Saviour; but with him living waters from thy sacred well I draw. Heaven! thou art too bright; I could not bear thine insufferable light, if I had not this shade with which I cover thee; but through it, as through a mist, I do behold the halo of thy glory, undiminished in its effulgence, but somewhat diminished in their potency which would be my destruction. The Saviour seems to calm his glory, to tone it down to our poor feeble frame. His name put into this wine of heaven, does not diminish in the least degree its sparkling and its exhilarating power; but it takes out of it that deep strength which might upset an angel’s brain, if he could drink to his full. It takes away the profundity of mystery, which would make the deep old wine of the kingdom intoxicating rather than cheering. Christ Jesus cast into the river of God, makes all the streams more sweet; and when the believer sees God in the person of the Saviour, he then sees the God whom he can love, and to whom with boldness he can approach. Surely I love this promise all the better, because I think I see my Saviour, with his hand all bleeding, stamping his hand upon it, and saying, “And thy Redeemer,” and there is the blood mark left upon the promise. It does seem to me as if when God uttered that promise to the poor worm Jacob, Jesus Christ could not be still. He heard his Father say, “Fear not, worm Jacob;” and he saw the poor worm, with his head on one side, with his eyes all flowing with tears, with his heart palpitating with terror, and his arms folded in dismay; and when his Father had said, “Fear not,” he stepped from behind, and whispered in a voice more soft than the voice of his Father, “Fear not, worm Jacob, it is God that speaks;” and then the soft voice says, “And it is thy Redeemer that speaks too.” *He* says, “Fear not.” He who loves thee, who knows thee, who has felt what thou feelest, who has passed through the woes which thou art now enduring—he who is thy Kinsman and thy Brother, he also says “Fear not, worm Jacob.” Oh, it is sweet, it is precious to look upon that word, as spoken by our Redeemer.

III. And now we come to the other point. I think this is put in by way of CONFIRMATION. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses surely the whole shall be established."

"Blind unbelief is sure to err."

It needs many witnesses to make such unbelieving souls as we are, believe the promises. "Now," says God, "I will help thee. Unbelief! wilt thou doubt Jehovah? Can the "I Am that I Am" lie? Can the God of faithfulness and truth deceive thee? O unbelief! infamous traitor! wilt thou dare to doubt him? Yes, and Christ knew it would; and so he comes in and he says, "and thy Redeemer," as a second witness; whilst the Spirit is the third. "Thy Redeemer," volunteers to be the second guarantee, the other security to the faithfulness of this promise. The Father will lose his honor if he breaks his word; and I too do give as the security for the fulfillment of this promise, my troth and honor also. "Thy Redeemer" engages that he will help thee, O thou worm!

And now, I want you to read the promise, recollecting that it says, "Thy Redeemer;" and then, as you read it through, you will see how the word "Redeemer" seems to confirm it all. Now begin. "*I will help thee;*" lay a stress on that word. If you read it so, there is one blow at your unbelief. "*I will help thee,*" saith the Redeemer. "Others may not, but I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and by the bands of my lovingkindness have I drawn thee. '*I will help thee,* though the earth forsake thee; though thy father and thy mother forsake thee, *I will take thee up.* Wilt thou doubt me? I have proved my love to thee. Behold this gash, this spear thrust in my side. Look hither at my hands: wilt thou but believe me?' 'Tis I.' I said that on the waters, and I said to my people, 'Be not afraid; it is I.' I say to thee, now thou art on the waters, 'Be not afraid; *I will help thee.*' Sure thou needst not fear that I shall ever forget thee. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' 'I have graven thee on my hands; thy walls are ever before me.' '*I will help thee.*'" Now, you must just suppose the Saviour standing here—that Man whose garments are red with blood; you must suppose him standing where I stand to-night, and saying to you, personally, "Fear not, *I will help you.*" O my Lord, I have ungratefully doubted thy promise many a time; but methinks, if I could see thee in all thy woe and sorrow for me, if I could hear thee say, "*I will help thee,*" I should cast myself at thy feet, and say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." But though he is not here to speak it, though the lips that utter it are but the lips of man, remember that he speaks through me to-night, and through his word, as truly as if he spoke himself. If some great man should by a servant, or by a letter send to you this message, "I will keep you," though you had not heard his own lips declare it, yet if you saw his own hand writing, you would say, "It is enough, I believe it; there is the master's hand writing; it is his own autograph, it is written by himself; behold the bloody signature! It is stamped with his cross, and I his messenger am sent to-night to myself and to you, and I say to my own heart and to you, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope

thou in God; for I shall yet praise him; for the Redeemer says, *I will help thee,*” and if he saith ”*I will help thee,*” who can doubt him? who dare distrust him?

And now let us read the promise again, and lay the stress on the “will.” Oh, the “wills” and the “shalls:” they are the sweetest words in the Bible. “*I will help thee.*” When God says “*I will,*” there is something in it, brethren. The will of God started worlds into existence; the will of God made nature leap from chaos; the will of God sustains all worlds, “bears the earth’s huge pillars up,” and establishes creation. It is God’s “*I will.*” He lets the world live; they live on the “will” of God; and if he willed that they should die, they must sink as the bubble into the breaker, when its moment has arrived. And if the “will” of God is so strong as that, may we not lay a great stress upon it here—“*I will help thee?*” There is no doubt about it. I do not say I may help thee peradventure. No; *I will.* I do not say, that possibly I may be persuaded to help thee. No; I voluntarily *will* to help thee. “*I will help thee.*” I do not say that, in an probability, ninety-nine chances out of a hundred, it is likely I may help thee. No; but without allowing any peradventure, or so much as a jot or tittle of hap or hazard, *I will.* Now, is there not strength in that? Indeed, my brethren, this is enough to cheer any man’s spirit, however much he may be cast down, if God the Holy Spirit does but breathe upon the text, and let its spices flow abroad into our poor souls, “Fear not, *I will help thee.*”

And now we lay stress on another word: “*I will help thee.*” That is very little for me to do, to *help* thee. Consider what I have done already. What! not help thee? Why, I bought thee with my blood. What! not help thee? I have died for thee; and if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? *Help* thee, my beloved! It is the least thing I will ever do for thee. I have done more, and I will do more. Before the day-star first began to shine I chose thee. “*I will help thee.*” I made the covenant for thee, and exercised all the wisdom of my eternal mind in the scheming of the plan of salvation. “*I will help thee.*” I became a man for thee; I doffed my diadem, and laid aside my robe; I laid the purple of the universe aside to become a man for thee. If I did this, *I will help* thee. I gave my life, my soul, for thee; I slumbered in the grave, I descended into Hades, all for thee; *I will help* thee. It will cost me nothing. Redeeming thee cost me much, but I have all and abound. In helping thee, I am giving thee what I have bought for thee already. It is no new thing. I can do it easily. “Help thee?” Thou needst never fear that. If thou needest a thousand times as much help as thou dost need, I would give it thee; but it is little that thou dost require compared with what I have to give. ‘Tis great for thee to need, but it is nothing for me to bestow. “*Help* thee?” Fear not. If there were an ant at the door of thy granary asking for help, it would not ruin thee to give him a handful of thy wheat; and thou art nothing but a tiny insect at the door of my all-sufficiency. All that thou couldst ever eat, all that thou couldst ever take, if thou wert to take on to all eternity, would no more diminish my all-sufficiency, than the drinking of the fish would diminish the sea. No; “*I will help* thee.” If I have died for thee, I will not leave thee.

And now, just take the last word—"I will help *thee*." Lay the stress there. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; I will help *thee*." If I let the stars fall, I will help *thee*; if I let all nature run to rack and ruin, I will help *thee*. If I permit the teeth of time to devour the solid pillars upon which the earth doth stand, yet I will help *thee*. I have made a covenant with the earth, "that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease;" but that covenant, though true, is not so great as the covenant that I have made concerning thee. And if I keep my covenant with the earth, I will certainly keep my covenant with my Son. "Fear not; I will help *thee*." Yes, thee! Thou sayest, "I am too little for help;" but I will help thee, to magnify my power; thou sayest, "I am too vile to be helped," but I will help thee to manifest my grace. Thou sayest, "I have been ungrateful for former help;" but I will help thee to manifest my faithfulness. Thou sayest, "But I shall still rebel, I shall still turn aside." "I will help *thee*," to show forth my long suffering; let it be known, "I will help *thee*."

And now just conceive my Master on his gross bleeding there, looking down on you and on me. Picture him, whilst his voice falters with love and misery conjoined; and hear him. He has just now spoken to the thief, and he has said to him, "To-day, shalt thou be with me in Paradise." And after he has said that, he catches a sight of you and of me, poor and depressed, and he says, "Fear not, worm Jacob; I will help *thee*; I helped the thief—I will help *thee*. I promised him that he should be with me in paradise; I may well promise thee that thou shalt be helped. I will help thee. O Master! may thy love that prompts thee thus to speak, prompt us to believe thee.

And now hear Him again. He is exalted on high; he hath "led captivity captive and received gifts for men;"—now hear him, as in the midst of the solemn pomp of heaven he is not unmindful of his poor relations. He looks down, and he sees us in this world still struggling with sin and care and woe; he hears us claiming kingship with himself; and he says, "Worm Jacob! though I now do reign exalted high, my love is still as great. I *will* help *thee*." I pray the Lord apply the sweetness of that pronoun to your hearts, my brethren, and to mine. "I will help *thee*." O surely when the husband speaks to the wife in the hour of darkness and sorrow, and comforts her, you can easily understand what arguments he uses, when he says, "Wife of my youth! my joy, my delight, I will help *thee*!" You can easily conceive how he enumerates times of love, seasons when he stood by her in the hour of trouble; you can easily think how he reminds her of the days of their espousals, and tells her of their struggles, and of their joys; and he says, "Wife, canst thou doubt me? No; as I am a husband I *will* help *thee*! And now you hear the Saviour speaking of his church. "Betrothed to me ere time began, I have taken thee into union with my adorable person; and O my bride, though my palace stand in ruins, and heaven itself should shake, I *will* help thee. Forget thee? Forget my bride? Be false to my troth? Forsake my covenant? No; never. I *will* help *thee*." Hear the mother speaking to her little child in great danger; "Child," she says, "I will help *thee*;" and then she reminds that child that she is its mother, that from her breast the child drew its

needed nourishment in the days of weakness; she reminds it how she has nursed it, and dandled it upon her knee, and how in every way she has been its solace and support. “Child!” says she, and her heart runs over—“I will help *thee!*” Why, the child never doubts it, it says, “Yes, mother, I know you will; I am sure of that, I do not need to be told it, I was certain you would, for I have had such proofs of your love.” And now ought not we who love the Saviour just to let our eyes run with tears, and say, “O thou blest Redeemer! thou needst not tell us thou wilt help us, for we know thou wilt. Oh do not suppose that we doubt thee so much as to want to be told of it again; we know thou will help us; we are sure of it; thy former love, thine ancient love, the love of thine espousals, thy deeds of kindness, thine everlasting drawings, all these declare that thou never canst forsake us.” No, no; “I will help *thee.*”

And now, brethren, we are coming down stairs to eat the body of Christ and drink his blood in a spiritual manner; and I hope whilst we are partaking of that bread and wine, the emblems of the Saviour, we shall think we hear every mouthful of bread and every sip of wine saying out in the Master’s behalf, “I will help *thee*, I will help *thee.*” And then let us just frighten Satan, by cheering up our spirits through the power of the Holy Ghost, and buckling on our armor, let us go forth into the world to-morrow, to show what the Redeemer can do, when his promise is applied by the Spirit. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee.” Come, bring your fears out to-night, and serve them in the worst way you can. Hang them here upon the scaffold this night. Come now, and blow them away at the great guns of the promises, let them be destroyed forever. They are renegade mutineers; let them be cut off, let them be utterly destroyed, and let us go and sing, “Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” “I will help *thee*,” saith the Redeemer.

O sinners, I pity you, that this is not your promise. If this were all that you did lose by being out of Christ, it were enough to lose indeed. May God call you, and help you to trust in the Redeemer’s blood. Amen.

Instability

A Sermon

(No. 158)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 11, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”—[Genesis 49:4](#).

PERFECT STABILITY has ceased from the world since the day when Adam fell. He was stable enough when in the garden he was obedient to his Master's will, but when he ate of the forbidden fruit he did not only slide himself, but he shook the standing places of all his posterity. Perfect stability belongs alone to God he alone, of all beings, is without variableness or shadow of a turning. He is immutable, he will not change. He is all-wise, he need not change. He is perfect; he cannot change. But men, the best of them are mutable, and therefore to a degree, they are unstable, and do not excel. Yet it is remarkable that, although man has lost perfect stability, he has not lost the admiration of it. Perhaps there is no virtue, or, rather, no compound of virtues, which the world more esteems than stability of mind. You will find that, although men have often misplaced their praise, and have called those great who were not great, morally, but were far below the level of morality, yet they have scarcely ever called a man great who has not been consistent, who has not had strength of mind enough to be stable in his principles. I know not how it is, but so it is, whenever a man is firm and consistent, we always admire him for it. Though we feel certain that he is wrong, yet his consistency in his wrong still excites our admiration. We have known men whom we have thought to be insane, they have conceived a design so ridiculous that we could only laugh at them, and despise their idea; but they have stuck to it, and we have said, “Well, there is nothing like a man standing to a thing,” and we have admired even the senseless, brainless idiot, as we have thought him, when we have seen him pertinaciously insisting that his idea would at last triumph, and persevering in futile endeavors to realize his wish. The weathercock man is never admired, as a politician or as anything else he will never succeed; he must be one thing or another, or the world will never respect him.

Now, my brethren, if it be so in earthly things, it is so also in spiritual. Instability in religion is a thing which every man despises, although every man has, to a degree, the evil in himself, but stability in the firm profession and practice of godliness, will always win respect, even from the worldly, and certainly will not be forgotten by him whose smile is honor and whose praise is glory, even the great Lord and Master, before whom we stand or fall. I have many characters here to-day whom I desire to address in the words of my text. “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.” I propose, first, briefly to notice, *the common and unavoidable instabilities* which necessarily attach themselves to the best of Christians. I shall then note

the character of a *Christian who is noted for glaring instability*, but who, notwithstanding, has sufficient of godliness to bid us hope that he is a child of God, I shall then have to do with *the mere professor*, who is “unstable as water,” and cannot excel in any way whatever; and then I must deal with *the unstable sinner* who, in any pretensions he may ever make to better feelings, is always like the early cloud and the morning dew.

I. First, then, to ALL Christians, permit me to address myself. Our father Adam, spoilt us all; and, although the second Adam has renewed us, he has not yet removed from us the infirmities, which the first Adam left us as a mournful legacy. We are none of us stable as we should be. We had a notion when we were first converted, that we should never know a change; our soul was so full of love that we could not imagine it possible we should ever flag in our devotion; our faith was so strong in our Incarnate Master, that we smiled at older Christians who talked of doubts and fears; our faces were so stedfastly set Zionward that we never imagined Bye-path Meadow would ever be trodden by our feet. We felt sure that our course would certainly be “like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” But, my brethren, have we found it so? Have we not this day to lament that we have been very changeable and inconstant, even unstable as water? How unstable have we been in our frames? To-day we have climbed the top of Pisgah, and have viewed the heavenly landscape over by the eye of faith; to-morrow we have been plunged in the dungeon of despair, and could not call a grain of hope our own; to-day we have feasted at the banquetting table of communion; to-morrow we have been exclaiming, “Oh! that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even unto his feet.” At night I have said, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me,” to-morrow has beheld my grasp loosened, and prayer neglected until God has said “I will return unto my rest, until thou hast acknowledged thy transgressions, which thou hast committed against me.” High frames one day, low frames the next We have had more changes than even this variable climate of ours. It is a great mercy for us that frames and slings are not always the index of our security, for we are as safe when we are mourning as we are when we are singing; but verily, if our true state before God had changed as often as our experience of his presence, we must have been cast into the bottomless pit years ago.

And how variable have we been in our faith! In the midst of one trouble we have declared, “though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” We have courted the jeer, we have laughed at the scorn of the world, and have stood like rocks in the midst of foaming billows, when all men were against us; another week has seen us flying away, after denying our Master, because, like Peter, we were afraid of some little maid, or of our own shadow. After coming out of a great trouble, we have resolutely declared “I can never doubt God again,” but the next cloud that has swept the sky, has darkened all our faith. We have been variable in our faith.

And have you not also, at times, my friends, felt variable in your love? Sweet Master, King of heaven, fairest of a thousand fairs! my heart is knit to thee—my soul melteth at the

mention of thy name; my heart bubbleth up with a good matter, when I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.

The strings that bind around my heart,
Tortures and racks may tear them off;
But they can never, never part,
The hold I have of Christ, my love.”

Sure, I could die for thee, and think it better than to live, if so I might honor thee. This is the sweet manner of our spirit when our love is burning and fervent: but anon we neglect the fire, it becomes dim, and we have to rake among the ashes even for a spark, crying,

“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?”

How unstable we are! At one time we are quite certain we are the Lord's. though an angel from heaven should deny our election, or our adoption, we would reply that we have the witness of the Spirit that we are born of God, but perhaps within two minutes we shall not be able to say that we ever had one spiritual feeling. We shall perhaps think that we never repented aright, never fled to Christ aright, and did never believe to the saving of the soul. Oh! it is no wonder that we do not excel, when we are such unstable creatures. Alas! my brethren I might enlarge on the inconsistencies of the mass of Christians. How unfaithful we have been to our dedication vows! how negligent of close communion! How unlike we have been to holy Enoch! how much more like Peter, when he followed afar off! I might tell how one day, like the mariner, we mounted up to heaven, and how the next moment we have gone to the lowest depths when the waves of God's grace have ceased to lift us up. I wonder at David, at Jacob, and at every instance we have in Scripture of excellent men. Marvel! O ye angels, that God should ever make such bright stars out of such black blots as we are. How can it ever be that man, so fickle, so inconstant, should nevertheless be a pillar in the house of his God, and should be made to stand “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!” How is it, O our God, that thou couldst have steered a vessel so safely to its port which was so easily driven by every wind and carried away by every wave! He is a good marksman who can shoot so crooked an arrow straight to its target. Marvel not that we do not excel—marvel that we do excel in anything unstable as we are.

II. And now leaving these general remarks I have to single out a certain class of persons. I believe them to be TRUE CHRISTIANS but they are Christians of a singular sort. I would not be so harsh as to condemn them, though I must certainly condemn the error with which I am about to find fault. I doubt not that they have been converted in a genuine manner, but still they are often a mystery to me, and I should think they are a mystery to themselves. How many Christians have we in our churches that are unstable as water! I suppose they

were born so. They are just as unstable in business as they are in religion; they open a grocer's shop, and shut it in three months, and turn drapers, and when they have been drapers long enough to become almost bankrupts, they leave that and try something else. When they were boys they could never play a game through, they must always be having something fresh, and now they are just as childish as when they were children. Look at them in doctrine: you never know where to find them. You meet them one day, and they are very full of some super-lapsarian doctrine, they have been to some strong Calvinist place, and nothing will suit them except the very highest doctrine and that must be spiced with a little of the gall of bitterness, or they cannot think it is the genuine thing. Very likely next week they will be Arminians; they will give up all idea of a fixed fate, and talk of free-will, and man's responsibility like the most earnest Primitive Methodist. Then they steer another way. "Nothing is right but the Church of England. Is it not established by law? Ought not every Christian to go to his parish church?" Ah! ah, Let them alone, they will be at the most gross schismatical shop in the metropolis before long. Or if they do not change their denomination they are always changing their minister. A new minister starts up; there is no one, since the apostles, like him; they take a seat and join the church; he is everything to them. In three months they have done with him, another minister rises up some distance off, and these people are not particular how far they walk; so they go to hear *him*. He is the great man of the age; he will see every man's candle out, and his will burn on. But a little trouble comes on the church, and they leave him. They have no attachment to anything; they are merely feathers in the wind or corks on the wave. They hear a sermon preached, and they say, "I think it did me good" but they do not venture to be sure till they speak to some great man who is a member of the church, and he says "Oh! there was nothing in it." "Ah! just so," they say, and cannot make up their minds whether it was a good sermon or not. They are unstable; they could easily be talked into anything or out of anything, they never had any brains in their head, I suppose, or if they ever had any they gave them to somebody else to muddle as he liked. They believe the last man they hear, and are easily guided and led by him.

Now, if the matter ended there it would not be so bad; but these poor people are just the same with regard to any religious enterprise they take in hand. There is a Sunday-school, they are enchanted with the thought. What a lovely thing it must be to sit on a form and try to teach half-a-dozen boys the way to heaven. They go to the Sunday-school and are alarmed the very first day, when they hear all the boys talking louder than the teachers. After about ten minutes they think it is not quite so nice as they thought. Perhaps they think it is that particular school they do not like, and they try another, and at last they give up all Sunday-school teaching, and make up their minds that it is not a good thing, at least not for them. Then there is a Ragged-school. What a divine enterprise! They will be Ragged-school teachers, and off they go with their hearts full of fire, and their eyes full of tears over these poor ragged-school children they are going to teach. Ah! how soon is their zeal withered

and all their glory departed! Hear them talk about Ragged-schools a month afterwards: they shake their heads and say it is a very arduous enterprise. They do not think they had a call to it, they will try something else, and so they keep on to the end of the chapter, they are “everything by turns, and nothing long.” There are some brethren in the ministry very much of the same sort. They never preach in one pulpit long, (though some say they preach there too long, for they ought never to have preached there at all) but I sometimes think that if they had had a little more courage, and bore a little more of the brunt of the battle, they might have done good to some of the villages where they were placed. But they are unstable as water, and everybody sees that they cannot excel. The same instability men will carry out in their friendships; they meet a person one day, and are as friendly as possible with him; they meet him the next day, he does not know what he has done to offend them, but they turn their head another way. And some carry their instability a little farther, they carry it into their moral character. I shall not deny their Christianity, but they are a queer sort of Christians. For these people will sometimes, at least, stretch the cords of godliness a little too far, and though they certainly do act in the main conscientiously, yet their conscience is a large one, and it admits a great many things which tender-hearted people would think were wrong. We cannot find out any crime for which we could excommunicate them, yet in our hearts we often say, “Dear me! what a sad disgrace so-and-so is to the cause; we could do far better without him than with him, for he casts such a slur on the name of Christ.”

Now, do not think I am drawing a fancy picture. I beg to inform you I am not; there are persons here who are furnishing me with the model; and if they choose to think me personal I shall be obliged to them, for I intend to be. These persons are to be found in all churches and among all denominations. You have met them everywhere. They are as unstable as water; they do not excel.

Now, let me address these persons very earnestly. My brother, I would be far from dealing in a censorious manner with thee, for I am inclined to think that thine instability is a little owing to some latent insanity. We are no doubt all of us insane to a degree; there is some little thing in us, which if we saw in another we should regard as being a little madness. I would therefore, my brother, deal very leniently with you, but at the same time let me very solemnly address you as a Christian minister speaking to a professedly Christian man. My brother, how much moral weight you lose in the church, and in the world by your perpetual instability. No one ever attaches any importance to your opinion, because your opinion has no importance in it, seeing that you yourself will contradict it in a very short time. You see many persons growing up in the church who have an influence over their neighbor for good; you sometimes wish that you too could strengthen the young convert, or reclaim and guide the wanderer. My brother you cannot do it, because of your inconsistency. Now is it not a fearful thing that you should be throwing away the whole force and weight of your character, simply because of this insane habit of yours of being always unstable? I beseech thee, my

brother, recollect that thou art responsible to God for thine influence; and if thou canst have influence and dost not get it thou art as sinful as if, having influence, thou hadst misused it. Do not, I beseech thee, suffer this instability to continue, lest thou shouldst become like the chaff which the wind driveth away—of no account to the world at all. Remember, my brother, how your instability ruins your usefulness. You never continue long enough in an enterprise to do good. What would you think of the farmer who should farm just long enough to plough his ground and sow his wheat, but not long enough to get a harvest? You would think him foolish; but just so foolish are you. You begin time enough to be overworked before you have well commenced. My brother, review your history, what have you done? You have made hundreds of futile attempts to do something, but a list of failures must be the only record of your labors. What do you think will be your distress of mind when you come to die, when you look back upon your life, and see it all the way through, a host of blunders? Do you not think it will stuff the pillow of your dying bed with thorns, to think that you were so wayward in disposition, so unstable in heart, that you were unable to accomplish anything for your Master, so that when you lay your crown at his feet you will have to say, “There is my crown, my Master but it has not a solitary star in it for I never worked long enough for thee in any enterprise to win a soul; I only did enough to fail and to be laughed at by all.” And I would have thee think also, my brother, how canst thou be a growing Christian, and yet be so changeable as thou art? If a gardener should plant a tree to day, and take it up in the course of a month, and transfer it to another place, what crop would he have when autumn came? He would not have much to repay his toil. The continual changing of the tree would put it into such a weakly condition, that if it did not actually die, it would certainly produce nothing. And how can you expect to grow in knowledge when you have no steadfast principle? The man who espouses one form of doctrine, and does it honestly, will, though it be a mistaken form, at least understand it, but you do not know enough of Calvinism to defend it from its opponents, or enough of Arminianism to defend it from the Calvinists. You are not wise in anything, you are a rolling stone, you gather no moss. You stay in one school only long enough to read through the curriculum, but you learn nothing. You are smiling I see. And yet some of those who smiled are just the men we smile at. They are here. But alas! I have noticed one sad thing respecting these people, they are generally the most conceited in all the world; they are excellent men they think; they are at home everywhere. If they are in error they know they can get right to-morrow, and then if some one else will again convince them they are in error, they know no difference between error and truth, except the difference which other people like to point out to them. O ye unstable Christians, hear ye the word of the Lord! “Unstable as water thou shalt not excel.” Your life shall have little of the cream of happiness upon it: you shall not walk in the midst of the king’s highway, in which no lion shall be found, but you shall walk on the edge of the way, where you shall encounter every danger, feel every hardship and endure every ill. You

shall have enough of God's comfort to keep you alive, but not enough to give you joy in your spirit and consolation in your heart. Oh, I beseech you ponder a little. Study the Word more, know what is right, and defend what is right. Study the Law more, know what is right, and do what is right. Study God's will more, know what he would have you do, and then do it. For an unstable Christian never can excel.

III. But now there is another class of persons whom we dare not, in the spirit of the widest charity admit to be true Christians. They are PROFESSORS they have been baptized, they receive the Lord's Supper, they attend prayer meetings church meetings, and everything else that belongs to the order of Christians with which they are connected. They are never behindhand in religious performances; they are the most devout hypocrites, they are the most pious formalists that could be discovered, range the wide world o'er. Their religion on the Sabbath day is of the most superfine order; their godliness when they are in their pews cannot be exceeded. They sing with the most eloquent praise, they pray the longest and most hypocritical prayer that man could utter; they are just up to the mark in every religious point of view, except on the point which looks to the heart As far as the externals of godliness go there is nothing to be desired. They tithe the anise, the mint, and the cummin; they fast twice in the week; or if they do not fast, they are quite as religious in not fasting, and are just as godly in not doing it, as if they did it.

But these people are unstable as water, in the worst sense; for whilst they sing Watts's hymns on Sunday, they sing other songs on Monday, and whilst they drink sacramental cups on Sabbath evenings, there are other cups of which they drink too deep on other nights; and though they pray most marvellously, there is a pun on that word *pray*, and they know how to exercise it upon their customers in business. They have a great affection for everything that is pious and devout; but alas! like Balaam, they take the reward of wickedness, and they perish in the gainsaying of Core. "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." They bring a disgrace upon the cause which they profess: not the vilest profane swearer brings more dishonor on God's holy name than they do. They can find fault with everything in the church, whilst they commit all manner of wickedness, and are, as the apostle said, even weeping "enemies of the cross of Christ, for their God is their belly, and they glory in their shame." O hypocrite, thou thinkest that thou shalt excel, because the minister has been duped, and gives thee credit for a deep experience, because the deacons have been entrapped and think thee to be eminently godly, because the church members receive thee to their houses, and think thee a dear child of God too! Poor soul! mayhap thou mayest go to thy grave with the delusion in thy brain that all is right with thee; but remember, though like a sheep thou art laid in thy grave, Death will find thee out. He

will say to thee, Off with thy mask, man! away with all thy robes! Up with that whitewashed sepulcher! Take off that green turf; let the worms be seen. Out with the body; let us see the reeking corruption! and what wilt thou say when thine abominably corrupt and filthy heart shall be opened before the sun, and men and angels hear thy lies and hypocrisies laid bare before them? Wilt thou play the hypocrite then? Soul, come and sing God's praises in the day of judgment with false lip! Tell him now, while a widow's house is in your throat, tell him that you love him! Come, now, thou that devourest the fatherless, thou that robbest, thou that dost uncleanness! tell him now that thou didst make thy boast in the Lord! tell him that thou didst preach his word, tell him that thou didst walk in his streets! tell him thou didst make it known that thou wert one of the excellent of the earth! What! man, is thy babbling tongue silent for once? What is the matter with thee? Thou wast never slow to talk of thy godliness. Speak out, and say "I took the sacramental cup; I was a professor." Oh how changed! The whitewashed sepulcher has become white in another sense, he is white with horror. See now; the talkative has become dumb; the boaster is silent; the formalist's garb is rent to rags, the moth has devoured their beauty; their gold has become tarnished, and their silver cankered. Ah! it must be so with every man who has thus belied God and his own conscience. The stripping day of judgment will reveal him to God and to himself. And how awful shall be the damnation of the hypocrite! If I knew that I must be damned, one of my prayers should be, "Lord, let me not be damned with hypocrites," for surely to be damned with them is to be damned twice over. Conceive of a hypocrite going into hell. You know how one of the prophets depicted the advent of a great monarch into hell, when all the kings that had been his slaves rose up and said, "Art thou become like one of us?" Do you not think you see the godly Christian deacon, so godly that he was a liar all his life? Do you not think you see the eminent Christian member that kept a bank, took the chair at public meetings, swindled all he could, and died in despair? Do you not think you see him coming into the pit? There is one man there that was a drunkard all his life. Hear his speech, "*Ah! you were a sober man! you used to talk to me, and tell me that drunkards could not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Aha! and art thou become like one of us?*" Says another, "*About a month ago, when we were on earth, you met me and rebuked me for profane swearing, and told me that all swearers should have their portion in the lake. Ah! there is not much to choose between thee and me now, is there?*" And the profane man laughs as well as he can laugh in misery at his desperately religious adviser. "*Oh!*" says another—and they look round at one another with demoniac mirth; as much mockery of joy as hell can afford—"*The parson here? Now preach us a sermon; now pray us a long prayer! Plenty of time to do it in!*" "No!" says another, "*there is no widow's house to eat, here, and he only prayed on the strength of the widow's house.*"

This is a hard scene for me to describe; but I doubt not of its truthfulness. It may be given to you in rough language, but it needs far rougher to make you know the dread reality.

And what a solemn thought it is! there is not one man nor one woman in this place who has not need to ask, "Is it so with me?" Many have been deceived—I may be—you may be, my hearer. "I am not deceived," says one, "I am a minister." My brethren, there are many of us who are preachers who are like Noah's carpenters; we may help to build an ark, and never get in it ourselves. Says another, "I shall not endure such language as that; I am a deacon." You may be all that, and yet, after having ministered, instead of earning to yourself a good degree, you may be cast from the presence of God. "No," says another, "but I have been a Christian professor these last forty years, and nobody has found fault with me." Ah! I have known many A rotten bough to have stopped on a tree forty years, and you may be rotten and yet stand all that time; but the winds of judgment will crack you at last, and down you will fall. "Nay," says another. "I know I am not insincere I am sure I am right." I am glad that you think so, but I would not like you to say it. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." There have been many great bubbles that have burst ere this, and your piety may be one of them. "Let not him that putteth on the harness boast as though he put it off." It will be time enough for you to be quite sure when you are quite safe. Yet blessed be God, we hope we can say, "O Lord, if not awfully deceived we have given our hearts to thee! Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that we love thee, and if we do not, Lord thou knowest we pray this prayer from our hearts: 'Search me, O God, and try my ways, prove me and know my heart, and see if there be any evil way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.'" May God the Holy Spirit strengthen and settle each of us.

IV. And now I have the last word to address to those who MAKE NO PRETENSION TO RELIGION whatever. I have heard hundreds of persons in my short life excuse their sin by saying, "Well, I make no profession," and I have always thought it one of the strangest excuses, one of the most wild vagaries of apology to which the human mind could ever make resort. Take an illustration, which I have used before. To-morrow morning, when the Lord Mayor is sitting, there are two men brought up before him for robbery. One of them says he is not guilty, he declares that he is a good character, and he is an honest man in general though he was guilty in this case. He is punished. The other one says, "Well, your worship, I make no profession; I'm a down right thorough thief, and I don't make any profession of being honest at all." Why you can suppose how much more severe the sentence would be upon such a man. Now, when you say I do not make any profession of being religious, what does that mean? It means that you are a despiser of God and of God's law; it means that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. You that boast of making no profession of religion, you are boasting you know not what of. You would think it a strange thing for a man to boast that he made no profession of being a gentleman, or no profession of being honest, or no profession of being sober, or no profession of being chaste. You would shun a man who did this, at once. And you who make no pretensions to religion, just make your trial the more easy for there will be no need for any dispute concerning you. When the

scales of justice are lifted up at last you will be found to be light weight, and that upon your own confession. I cannot imagine you urging such a plea as that when God shall judge you. "My Lord, I made no profession." "What" saith the King, "did my subject make no profession of obedience?" "O Lord, I made no profession." "What!" saith the Creator, "make no profession of acknowledging my rights?" "I made no profession of religion." "What!" saith the Judge, "did I send my Son into the world to die, and did this man make no profession of casting his soul upon him? What! did he make no profession of his need of mercy? Then he shall have none. Does he dare tell me to my face that he never made any profession of faith in Christ, and never had anything to do with the Saviour? Then insomuch as he despised my Son, and despised his cross, and rejected his salvation, let him die the death;" and what that death is with its everlasting wailings and gnashing of teeth, eternity alone can tell.

O sinner! thou hast some part and lot in my text Thou art "unstable as water." Let me remind thee that though thou makest no profession of religion now, there was a time when thou didst. Strong man! you are laughing now: I repeat it, there was a time when you did talk about religion; it is not quite gone from your memory yet. You lay sick with fever for six weeks: do you recollect when the delirium came on, and they all thought that you must die? Do you recollect when your poor brain was right for a moment how you asked the physician whether there was any hope for you, and he would not exactly say "NO," but he looked so blank at you, that you understood what it meant? Do you recollect the agony with which you looked forward to death? Do you recollect how you groaned in your spirit, and said, "O God, have mercy upon me?" Do you recollect that you got a little better, and you told your friends that if you lived you would serve God? "Oh! it is all over now," you say, you were a fool! Yes, you were a fool, that is true, you were a fool, to have said what you did not mean and to have lied before God. You do not profess religion! But you remember the last time the terrific thunder and lightning came. You were out in the storm. A flash came very near you. You are a bold man, but not so bold as you pretend to be. You shook from head to foot, and when the thunder clap succeeded, you were almost down on your knees, and before you knew it you were in prayer. "Please God I get home to-night," you said, "I shall not take his name in vain again!" But you have done it. You are unstable as water. You went sometime ago to a church or a chapel—I mind not which: the minister told you plainly where you were going. You stood there and trembled; tears ran down your cheeks, you did not knock your wife about that Sunday, you were a greet deal more sober that week, and when your companion said you looked squeamish, you denied it, and said you had no such thoughts as he imagined. "Unstable as water." Oh! and there are some of you worse than that still: for not once, nor twice, but scores of times you have been driven under a faithful minister, to the very verge of what you thought repentance, and then, just when something said in your heart, "This is a turning point," you have started back, you have chosen the wages of unrighteousness, and have again wandered into the world. Soul! my heart yearns

for thee! “Unstable as water thou shalt not excel.” No, but I pray the Lord to work in thee something that will be stable; for we all believe—and what I say is not a matter of fiction, but a thing that you believe in your own hearts to be true—we all believe that we must stand before the judgment bar of God, and ere long give account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. Friend, what account wilt thou give of thy broken vows, of thy perjured soul? What wilt thou have to say why judgment should not be pronounced against thee? Ah! sinner, you will want Christ then! What would you give then for one drop of his blood? “Oh! for the hem of his garment! Oh, that I might but look to him and be lightened. Oh, would to God that I might hear the gospel once again!” I hear you wailing, when God has said, “Depart ye cursed!” And this is the burden of your song “Fool that I was, to have despised Jesus, who was my only hope, to have broken my promise, and gone back to the poor vain world that deluded me, after all!” And now I hear him say “I called, but ye refused, I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded; now I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.” I always think those two last sentences the most awful in the Bible. “I will laugh at your calamity.” The laugh of the Almighty over men that have rebelled against him, that have despised him, and trodden his gospel underfoot! “I also will laugh at your calamity I will mock when your fear cometh.” Rail at that if you like, it is sure, sirs. Remember that all your kicking at God’s laughter will not make him leave it off; remember that all your rebellious speeches against him shall be avenged in that day, unless ye repent, and that speak as ye will against him your blasphemy cannot quench the flames of hell, nor will your jeers slay the sword of vengeance: fall it must, and it will fall on you all the more heavily because you did despise it.

Hear the gospel, and then farewell. Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary and became a man, he lived on earth a life of holiness and suffering; at last he was nailed to the cross, and in deep woe he died. He was buried; he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven. And now God “commandeth all men everywhere to repent;” and he telleth them this—“Whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall not perish, but have eternal life.” And this is his gospel. If you this day feel yourself to be a sinner, if that be a feeling wrought in you by the Holy Spirit and not a casual thought flashing across the soul, then Christ was punished for your sins; and you cannot be punished; for God will not punish twice for one offense. Believe in Christ; cast your soul on the atonement that he made; and although black as hell in sin, you may this day find yourself, through the efficacious blood of Christ, whiter than the snow. The Lord help thee, poor soul, to believe that the Man who died on Calvary was God, and that he took the sin of all believers upon himself—that thou, being a sinner and a believer, he has taken thy sins, and that therefore thou art free. Thus believe, and by faith thou wilt have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement.

The True Christian's Blessedness

A Sermon

(No. 159)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 18, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“We know that all things work together far good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”—[Romans 8:28](#).

I. WE have here the description of a true Christian, and a declaration of that Christian's blessedness. We have him first very succinctly, but very fully described in these words—“Them that love God, them who are the called according to his purpose.” These two expressions are the great distinguishing marks whereby we are able to separate the precious from the vile, by discovering to us who are the children of God.

The first contains an outward manifestation of the second—“Them that love God.” Now, there are many things in which the worldly and the godly do agree, but on this point there IS a vital difference. No ungodly man loves God—at least not in the Bible sense of the term. An unconverted man may love a God, as, for instance, the God of nature, and the God of the imagination; but the God of revelation no man can love, unless grace has been poured into his heart, to turn him from that natural enmity of the heart towards God, in which all of us are born. And there may be many differences between godly men, as there undoubtedly are; they may belong to different sects, they may hold very opposite opinions, but all godly men agree in this, that they love God. Whosoever loveth God, without doubt, is a Christian; and whosoever loveth him not, however high may be his pretensions, however boastful his professions, hath not seen God, neither known him for “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” True believers love God as their *Father*; they have “the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father.” They love him as their *King*, they are willing to obey him, to walk in his commands is their delight; no path is so soft to their feet as the path of God's precepts, the way of obedience thereunto. They love God also as their *Portion*, for in him they live and move and have their being; God is their all, without him they have nothing, but possessing him, however little they may have of outward good, they feel that they are rich to all the intents of bliss. They love God as their future *Inheritance*, they believe that when days and years are past they shall enter into the bosom of God; and their highest joy and delight is the full conviction and belief, that one day they shall dwell for ever near his throne, be hidden in the brightness of his glory, and enjoy his everlasting favor. Dost thou love God, not with lip-language, but with heart-service? Dost thou love to pay him homage? Dost thou love to hold communion with him? Dost thou frequent his mercy-seat? Dost thou abide in his commandments, and desire to be conformed unto his

Image? If so, then the sweet things which we shall have to say this morning are thine. But if thou art no lover of God, but a stranger to him, I beseech thee do not pilfer to-day and steal a comfort that was not intended for thee. "All things work together for good," but not to all men; they only work together for the good of "them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Note the second phrase, which contains also a description of the Christian—"the *called* according to his purpose." However much the Arminian may try to fritter away the meaning of this 8th chapter of the Romans we are obliged as long as we use terms and words to say, that the 8th chapter of the Romans and the 9th, are the very pillars of that Gospel which men now call Calvinism. No man after having read these chapters attentively, and having understood them, can deny that the doctrines of sovereign, distinguishing grace, are the sum and substance of the teaching of the Bible. I do not believe that the Bible is to be understood except by receiving these doctrines as true. The apostle says that those who love God are "the called according to his purpose" by which he means to say two things—first, that all who love God love him because he called them to love him. *He* called them, mark you. All men are called by the ministry, by the Word, by daily providence, to love God, there is a common call always given to men to come to Christ, the great bell of the gospel rings a universal welcome to every living soul that breathes; but alas! though that bell hath the very sound of heaven, and though all men do in a measure hear it, for "their line is gone out into all the earth and their Word unto the end of the world" yet there was never an instance of any man having been brought to God simply by that sound. All these things are insufficient for the salvation of any man; there must be superadded the special call, the call which man cannot resist, the call of efficacious grace, working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure. Now, all them that love God love him because they have had a special, irresistible, supernatural call. Ask them whether they would have loved God if left to themselves, and to a man, whatever their doctrines, they will confess—

"Grace taught my soul to pray,
Grace made my eyes o'erflow,
'Tis grace that kept me to this day
And will not let me go."

I never heard a Christian yet who said that he came to God of himself, left to his own free-will. Free-will may look very pretty in theory, but I never yet met any one who found it work well in practice. We all confess that if we are brought to the marriage-banquet—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That gently forced us in
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

Many men cavil at election; the very word with some is a great bug ear; they no sooner hear it than they turn upon their heel indignantly. But this know, O man, whatever thou sayest of this doctrine, it is a stone upon which, if any man fall, he shall suffer loss, but if it fall upon him it shall grind him to powder. Not all the sophisms of the learned, nor all the legerdemain of the cunning, will ever be able to sweep the doctrine of election out of Holy Scripture. Let any man hear and judge. Hearken ye to this passage in the 9th of Romans! “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor! What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.” These are God’s words; if any man doth cavil at them, let him cavil; he rejecteth the testimony of God against himself. If I promulgated the doctrine on my own authority, I could not blame you if you should turn against me, and reject it; but when, on the authority of Holy Scripture, I propound it, God forbid that any man should quarrel therewith.

I have affirmed, and I am sure most Christians will bear witness, that what I said was the truth, that if any man loveth God he loves him because God gave him grace to love him. Now, suppose I should put the following question to any converted man in this hall. *Side by side with you there sits an ungodly person; you two have been brought up together, you have lived in the same house, you have enjoyed the same means of grace, you are converted, he is not; will you please to tell me what has made the difference?* Without a solitary exception the answer would be this—“If I am a Christian and he is not, unto God be the honor.” Do you suppose for a moment that there is any injustice in God in having given you grace which he did not give to another? I suppose you say, “Injustice, no; God has a right to do as he wills with his own; I could not claim grace, nor could my companions, God *chose* to give it to me, the other has rejected grace wilfully to his own fault, and I should have done the same, but that he gave ‘more grace,’ whereby my will was constrained.” Now, sir, if it is not wrong for God to do the thing, how can it be wrong for God to purpose to do the thing? and what is election, but God’s purpose to do what he does do? It is a fact which any man

must be a fool who would dare to deny that God does give to one man more grace shall to another; we cannot account for the salvation of one and the non-salvation of another but by believing, that God has worked more effectually in one man's heart than another's—unless you choose to give the honor to man, and say it consists in one man's being better than another, and if so I will have no argument with you, because you do not know the gospel at all, or you would know that salvation is not of works but of grace. If, then, you give the honor to God, you are bound to confess that God has done more for the man that is saved than for the man that is not saved. How, then, can election be unjust, if its effect is not unjust? However, just or unjust as man may choose to think it, God has done it, and the fact stands in man's face, let him reject it as he pleases. God's people are known by their outward mark: they love God, and the secret cause of their loving God is this—God chose them from before the foundation of the world that they should love him, and he sent forth the call of his grace, so that they were called according to his purpose, and were led by grace to love and to fear him. If that is not the meaning of the text I do not understand the English language. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, *to them who are the called according to his purpose.*”

Now, my hearers, before I proceed to enter into the text, let the question go round. Do I love God? Have I any reason to believe that I have been called according to his purpose? Have I been born again from above? Has the Spirit operated in my heart in a manner to which flesh and blood never can attain? Have I passed from death unto life by the quickening agency of the Holy Ghost? If I have, then God purposed that I should do so, and the whole of this great promise is mine.

II. We shall take the words one by one, and try to explain them.

1. Let us begin with the word “work.” “We know that all things *work.*” Look around, above, beneath, and all things *work.* They work, *in opposition to idleness.* The idle man that folds his arms or lies upon the bed of sloth is an exception to God's rule; for except himself all things work. There is not a star though it seemeth to sleep in the deep blue firmament, which doth not travel its myriads of miles and work; there is not an ocean, or a river, which is not ever working, either clapping its thousand hands with storms, or bearing on its bosom the freight of nations. There is not a silent nook within the deepest forest glade where work is not going on. Nothing is idle. The world is a great machine, but it is never standing still: silently all through the watches of the night, and through the hours of day, the earth revolveth on its axis, and works out its predestinated course. Silently the forest groweth, anon it is felled; but all the while between its growing and felling it is at work. Everywhere the earth works; mountains work: nature in its inmost bowels is at work; even the center of the great heart of the world is ever beating; sometimes we discover its working in the volcano and the earthquake, but even when most still all things are ever working.

They are ever working too, *in opposition to the word play*. Not only are they ceaselessly active, but they are active for a purpose. We are apt to think that the motion of the world and the different evolutions of the stars are but like the turning round of a child's windmill; they produce nothing. That old preacher Solomon once said as much as that. He said—"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." But Solomon did not add, that things are not what they seem. The world is not at play; it hath an object in its wildest movement. Avalanche, hurricane, earthquake, are but order in an unusual form; destruction and death are but progress in veiled attire. Everything that is and is done, worketh out some great end and purpose. The great machine of this world is not only in motion, but there is something weaving in it, which as yet mortal eye hath not fully seen, which our text hinteth at when it says, It is working out good for God's people.

And once again, all things work *in opposition to Sabbath*. We morally speak of work, especially on this day, as being the opposite of sacred rest and worship. Now, at the present moment all things work. Since the day when Adam fell all things have had to toil and labor. Before Adam's fall the world kept high and perpetual holiday; but now the world has come to its work-days, now it hath to toil. When Adam was in the garden the world had its Sabbath: and it shall never have another Sabbath till the Millennium shall dawn, and then when all things have ceased to work, and the kingdoms shall be given up to God, even the Father, then shall the world have her Sabbath, and shall rest; but at present all things do work.

Dear brethren, let us not wonder if we have to work too. If we have to toil, let us remember, this is the world's week of toil. The 6,000 years of continual labor, and toil, and travail, have happened not to us alone, but to the whole of God's great universe; the whole world is groaning, and travailing. Let us not be backward in doing our work. If all things are working, let us work too—"work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work." And let the idle and slothful remember that they are a great anomaly; they are blots in the great work-writing of God; they mean nothing; in all the book of letters with which God has written out the great word "work," they are nothing at all. But let the man that worketh, though it be with the sweat of his brow and with aching hands, remember that he, if he is seeking to bless the Lord's people, is in sympathy with all things—not only in sympathy with their work, but in sympathy with their aim.

2. Now, the next word, "All things work *together*." That is *in opposition to their apparent confliction*. Looking upon the world with the mere eye of sense and reason, we say, "Yes, all things work, but they work contrary to one another. There are opposite currents; the wind bloweth to the north and to the south. The world's barque, it is true, is always tossed with waves, but these waves toss her first to the right and then to the left; they do not steadily bear her onward to her desired haven. It is true the world is always active, but it is with the

activity of the battle-field, wherein hosts encounter hosts and the weaker are overcome." Be not deceived; it is not so; things are not what they seem; "all things work *together*." There is no opposition in God's providence; the raven wing of war is co-worker with the dove of peace. The tempest strives not with the peaceful calm—they are linked together and work together, although they seem to be in opposition. Look at our history. How many an event has seemed to be conflicting in its day, that has worked out good for us? The strifes of barons and kings for mastery might have been thought to be likely to tread out the last spark of British liberty; but they did rather kindle the pile. The various rebellions of nations, the heavings of society, the strife of anarchy, the tumults of war—all, all these things, overruled by God, have but made the chariot of the church progress more mightily; they have not failed of their predestinated purpose—"good for the people of God." I know my brethren, it is very hard for you to believe this. "What!" say you? "I have been sick for many a day, and wife and children, dependent on my daily labor, are crying for food: will this work together for my good?" So saith the word, my brother, and so shalt thou find it ere long. "I have been in trade," says another, "and this commercial pressure has brought me exceedingly low, and distressed me: is it for my good?" My brother, thou art a Christian. I know thou dost not seriously ask the question, for thou knowest the answer of it. He who said, "all things work together," will soon prove to you that there is a harmony in the most discordant parts of your life. You shall find, when your biography is written, that the black page did but harmonize with the bright one—that the dark and cloudy day was but a glorious foil to set forth the brighter noon-tide of your joy. "All things work together." There is never a clash in the world: men think so, but it never is so. The charioteers of the Roman circus might with much cleverness and art, with glowing wheels, avoid each other; but God, with skill infinitely consummate, guides the fiery coursers of man's passion, yokes the storm, bits the tempest, and keeping each clear of the other from seeming evil still enduceth good, and better still; and better still in infinite progression.

We must understand the word "together," also in another sense. "All things work *together* for good:" that is to say, *none of them work separately*. I remember an old divine using a very pithy and homely metaphor, which I shall borrow to-day. Said he, "All things work *together* for good; but perhaps, any one of those 'all things' might destroy us if taken alone. The physician," says he, "prescribes medicine; you go to the chemist, and he makes it up; there is something taken from this drawer, something from that phial, something from that shelf: any one of those ingredients, it is very possible, would be a deadly poison, and kill you outright, if you should take it separately, but he puts one into the mortar, and then another, and then another, and when he has worked them all up with his pestle, and has made a compound, he gives them all to you as a whole, and together they work for your good, but any one of the ingredients might either have operated fatally, or in a manner detrimental to your health." Learn, then, that it is wrong to ask, concerning any particular act of

providence; is this for my good? Remember, it is not the one thing alone that is for your good; it is the one thing put with another thing, and that with a third, and that with a fourth, and all these mixed together, that work for your good. Your being sick very probably might not be for your good only God has something to follow your sickness, some blessed deliverance to follow your poverty, and he knows that when he has mixed the different experiences of your life together, they shall produce good for your soul and eternal good for your spirit. We know right well that there are many things that happen to us in our lives that would be the ruin of us if we were always to continue in the same condition. Too much joy would intoxicate us, too much misery would drive us to despair: but the joy and the misery, the battle and the victory, the storm and the calm, all these compounded make that sacred elixir whereby God maketh all his people perfect through suffering, and leadeth them to ultimate happiness. "All things work *together* for good."

3. Now we must take the next words. "All things work together *for good*." Upon these two words the meaning of my text will hinge. There are different senses to the word "good." There is *the worldling's sense*: "Who will show us any good?"—by which he means *transient good*, the good of the moment. "Who wilt put honey into my mouth? Who will feed my belly with hid treasures? Who will garnish my back with purple and make my table groan with plenty?" That is "good,"—the vat bursting with wine, the barn full of corn! Now God has never promised that "all things shall work together" for such good as that to his people. Very likely all things will work together in a clean contrary way to that. Expect not, O Christian, that all things will work together to make thee rich; it is just possible they may all work to make thee poor. It may be that all the different providences that shall happen to thee will come wave upon wave, washing thy fortune upon the rocks, till it shall be wrecked, and then waves shall break o'er thee, till in that poor boat, the humble remnant of thy fortune thou shalt be out on the wide sea, with none to help thee but God the Omnipotent. Expect not, then, that all things shall work together as for thy good.

The Christian understands the word "good" in another sense. By "good," he understands *spiritual good*. "Ah!" saith he, "I do not call gold good, but I call faith good! I do not think it always for my good to increase in treasure, but I know it is good to grow in grace. I do not know that it is for my good that I should be respectable and walk in good society; but I know that it is for my good that I should walk humbly with my God. I do not know that it is for my good that my children should be about me, like olive branches round my table, but I know that it is for my good that I should flourish in the courts of my God, and that I should be the means of winning souls from going down into the pit. I am not certain that it is altogether for my good to have kind and generous friends, with whom I may hold fellowship; but I know that it is for my good that I should hold fellowship with Christ, that I should have communion with him, even though it should be in his sufferings. I know it is good for me that my faith, my love, my every grace should grow and increase, and that I

should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ my blessed Lord and Master.” Well, Christian, thou hast got upon the meaning of the text, then. “All things work together,” for that kind of good to God’s people. “Well!” says one, “I don’t think anything of that, then.” No, perhaps thou dost not; it is not very likely swine should ever lift their heads from their troughs to think aught of stars. I do not much wonder that thou shouldst despise spiritual good, for thou art yet “in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity;” a stranger to spiritual things, and let thy despising of spiritual things teach thee that thou art not spiritual, and therefore thou canst not understand the spiritual, because it must be spiritually discerned. To the Christian, however, the highest good he can receive on earth is to grow in grace. “There!” he says, “I had rather be a bankrupt in business than I would be a bankrupt in grace; let my fortune be decreased—better that, than that I should backslide; there! let thy waves and thy billows roll over me—better an ocean of trouble than a drop of sin, I would rather have thy rod a thousand times upon my shoulders, O my God, than I would once put out my hand to touch that which is forbidden, or allow my foot to run in the way of gainsayers.” The highest good a Christian has here is good spiritual.

And we may add, the text also means *good eternal*, lasting good. All things work together for a Christian’s lasting good. They all work to bring him to Paradise—all work to bring him to the Saviour’s feet. “So he bringeth them to their desired haven,” said the Psalmist—by storm and tempest, flood and hurricane. All the troubles of a Christian do but wash him nearer heaven; the rough winds do but hurry his passage across the straits of this life to the port of eternal peace. All things work together for the Christian’s eternal and spiritual good.

And yet I must say here, that sometimes all things work together for the Christian’s *temporal good*. You know the story of old Jacob. “Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me,” said the old Patriarch. But if he could have read God’s secrets, he might have found that Simeon was not lost, for he was retained as a hostage—that Joseph was not lost but gone before to smooth the passage of his grey hairs into the grave, and that even Benjamin was to be taken away by Joseph in love to his brother. So that what seemed to be against him, even in temporal matters, was for him. You may have heard also the story of that eminent martyr who was wont always to say, “All things work together for good.” When he was seized by the officers of Queen Mary, to be taken to the stake to be burned, he was treated so roughly on the road that he broke his leg; and they jeeringly said, “All things work together for good, do they? How will your broken leg work for your good?” “I don’t know,” said he, “how it will, but for my good I know it will work, and you shall see it so.” Strange to say, it proved true that it was for his good; for being delayed a day or so on the road through his lameness, he just arrived in London in time enough to hear that Elizabeth was proclaimed queen, and so he escaped the stake by his broken leg. He turned round upon the men who carried him, as they thought, to his death, and said to them, “Now will you believe that all things work together for God?”

So that though I said the drift of the text was spiritual good, yet sometimes in the main current there may be carried some rich and rare temporal benefits for God's children as well as the richer spiritual blessings.

4. I am treating the text as you see, verbally. And now I must return to the word "work"—to notice the tense of it. "All things *work* together for good." It does not say that they *shall* work, or that they *have* worked; both of these are implied, but it says that they do work now. All things at this present moment are working together for the believer's good. I find it extremely easy to believe that all things *have* worked together for my good. I can look back at the past, and wonder at all the way whereby the Lord hath led me. If ever there lived a man who has reason to be grateful to Almighty God, I think I am that man. I can see black storms that have lowered o'er my head, and torrents of opposition that have run across my path, but I can thank God for every incident that ever occurred to me from my cradle up to now, and do not desire a better pilot for the rest of my days, than he who has steered me from obscurity and scorn, to this place to preach his word and feed this great congregation. And I doubt not that each of you, in looking back upon your past experience as Christians, could say very much the same. Through many troubles you have passed, but you can say, they have all been for your good. And somehow or other you have an equal faith for the future. You believe that all things will in the end work for your good. The pinch of faith always lies in the present tense. I can always believe the past, and always believe the future, but the present, the present, the present, that is what staggers faith. Now, please to notice that my text is in the present tense. "All things *work*," at this very instant and second of time. However troubled, downcast, depressed, and despairing, the Christian may be, all things are working now for his good; and though like Jonah he is brought to the bottom of the mountains, and he thinks the earth with her bars is about him for ever, and the weeds of despair are wrapped about his head, even in the uttermost depths all things are now working for his good. Here, I say again, is the pinch of faith. As an old countryman once said to me, from whom I gained many a pithy saying—"Ah! sir, I could always do wonders when there were no wonders to do. I feel, sir, that I could believe God; but then at the time I feel so there is not much to believe." And he just paraphrased it in his own dialect like this—"My arm is always strong, and my sickle always sharp, when there is no harvest, and I think I could mow many an acre when there is no grass; but when the harvest is on I am weak, and when the grass groweth then my scythe is blunt." Have not you found it so too? You think you can do wondrous things; you say,

"Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled,
Now I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world."

And now a little capful of wind blows on you and the tears run down your cheeks, and you say, "Lord, let me die; I am no better than my fathers." You, that were going to thrash mountains, find that molehills cast you down.

It behoveth each of us, then, to comfort and establish our hearts upon this word "work." "All things work." Merchant; though you have been sore pressed this week, and it is highly probable that next week will be worse still for you, believe that all things even then are working for your good. It will cost you many a pang to keep that confidence; but oh! for thy Master's honor, and for thine own comfort, retain that consolation. Should thine house of business threaten to tumble about thine ears so long as thou hast acted honourably, still bear thy cross. It shall work, it *is* working for thy good. This week, mother, thou mayest see thy first-born carried to the tomb. That bereavement is working for thy good. O man, within a few days, he that hath eaten bread with thee may lift up his heel against thee. It shall work for thy good. O thou that art high in spirits to-day, thou with the flashing eye and joyous countenance, ere the sun doth set some evil shall befall thee, and thou shalt be sad. Believe then that all things work together for thy good; if thou lovest God, and art called according to his purpose.

5. And now we close by noticing the *confidence* with which the apostle speaks. "A fiction!" says one; "a pleasant fiction, sir!" "Sentimentalism!" says another; "a mere poetic sentimentalism." "Ah!" cries a third; "a downright lie." "No," says another, "there is some truth in it, certainly; men do get bettered by their afflictions, but it is a truth that is not valuable to me, for I do not realize the good that these things bring." Gentlemen, the apostle Paul was well aware of your objections; and therefore mark how confidently he asserts the doctrine. He does not say, "I am persuaded;" he does not say, "I believe;" but with unblushing confidence he appears before you and says, "We" (I have many witnesses) *we know* that all things work together." What Paul are you at? So strange and startling a doctrine as this asserted with such dogmatic impudence? What can you be at? Hear his reply! "We know; In the mouth of two or three witnesses it shall all be established; but I have tens of thousands of witnesses." "We know," and the apostle lifts his hand to where the white-robed hosts are praising God for ever.—"These," says he, "passed through great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: ask them!" And with united breath they reply, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Daniel, all the mighty ones that have gone before, tell out the tale of their history, write their autobiography, and they say, "We!" It is proven to a demonstration in our own lives; it is a fact which runs like a golden clue through all the labyrinth of our history—"All things work together for good to them that love God." "We," says the apostle again—and he puts his hand upon his poor distressed brethren—he looks at his companions in the prisonhouse at Rome; he looks at that humble band of teachers in Rome, in Philippi, in all the different parts of Asia, and he says, "We!" "We know it. It is not with us a matter

of doubt; we have tried it, we have proved it. Not only does faith believe it, but our own history convinces us of the truth of it." I might appeal to scores and hundreds here, and I might say, brethren, you with grey heads, rise up and speak. Is this true or not? I see the reverend man rise, leaning on his staff, and with the tears "uttering his old cheeks, he says, "Young man it is true, I have proved it; even down to grey hairs I have proved it; he made, and he will carry; he will not desert his own!" Veteran! you have had many troubles, have you not? He replies, "Youth! troubles? I have had many troubles that thou reckest not of, I have buried all my kindred, and I am like the last oak of the forest, all my friends have been felled by death long ago. Yet I have been upheld till now, who could hold me up but my God!" Ask him whether God has been once untrue to him and he will say, "No; not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised; all hath come to pass!" Brethren, we can confidently say, then, hearing such a testimony as that, "*We know* that all things work." Besides, there are you of middle age, and even those of us who are young: the winter has not spared our branches, nor the lightnings ceased to scathe our trunk; yet here we stand; preserved by conquering grace. Hallelujah to the grace that makes all things work together for good!

O my hearer, art thou a believer in Christ? If not, I beseech thee, stop and consider! Pause and think of thy state; and if thou knowest thine own sinfulness this day, believe on Christ, who came to save sinners, and that done, all things shall work for thee, the tumbling avalanche, the rumbling earthquake the tottering pillars of heaven, all, when they fall or shake, shall not hurt thee, they shall still work out thy good. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved," for so runneth the gospel. The Lord bless you! Amen.

Light at Evening Time

A Sermon

(No. 160)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 25, 1857, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.”—[Zechariah 14:7](#).

I SHALL NOT stay to notice the particular occasion upon which these words were uttered, or to discover the time to which they more especially refer; I shall rather take the sentence as a rule of the kingdom, as one of the great laws of God’s dispensation of grace, “that at evening time it shall be light.” Whenever philosophers wish to establish a general law, they think it necessary to collect a considerable number of individual instances; these being put together, they then infer from them a general rule. Happily, this need not be done with regard to God. We have no need, when we look abroad in providence, to collect a great number of incidents, and then from them infer the truth; for since God is immutable, one act of his grace is enough to teach us the rule of his conduct. Now, I find in this one place it is recorded that on a certain occasion, during a certain adverse condition of a nation, God promised that “at evening time it should be light.” If I found that in any human writing, I should suppose that the thing might have occurred once, that a blessing was conferred in emergency on a certain occasion, but I could not from it deduce a rule; but when I find this written in the book of God, that on a certain occasion when it was evening time with his people God was pleased to give them light, I feel myself more than justified in deducing from it the rule, that always to his people at evening time there shall be light.

This, then, shall be the subject of my present discourse. There are different evening times that happen to the church and to God’s people, and as a rule we may rest quite certain that at evening time there shall be light.

God very frequently acts in grace in such a manner that we can find a parallel in nature. For instance, God says, “As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, even so shall my word be, it shall not return unto me void, it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing whereto I have sent it.” We find him speaking concerning the coming of Christ, “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth.” We find him liking the covenant of grace to the covenant which he made with Noah concerning the seasons, and with man concerning the different revolutions of the year—“Seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” We find that the works of creation are very frequently the mirror of the works of grace, and that we can draw figures from the world of Nature to illustrate the great acts of God in the world of his grace toward his people. But

sometimes God oversteps nature. In nature after evening time there cometh night. The sun hath had its hours of journeying; the fiery steeds are weary; they must rest. Lo, they descend the azure steeps and plunge their burning fetlocks in the western sea, while night in her ebon chariot follows at their heels. God, however, oversteps the rule of nature. He is pleased to send to his people times when the eye of reason expects to see no more day, but fears that the glorious landscape of God's mercies will be shrouded in the darkness of his forgetfulness. But instead thereof God overleapeth nature, and declares that at evening time instead of darkness there shall be light.

It is now my business to illustrate this general rule by different particulars. I shall dwell most largely upon the last, that being the principal object of my sermon this morning.

I. To begin, then, "At evening time it shall be light." The first illustration we take from *the history of the church at large*. The church at large has had many evening-times. If I might derive a figure to describe her history from anything in this lower world, I should describe her as being like a sea. At times the abundance of grace has been gloriously manifest. Wave upon wave has triumphantly rolled in upon the land, covering the mire of sin, and claiming the earth for the Lord of Hosts. So rapid has been its progress that its course could scarce be obstructed by the rocks of sin and vice. Complete conquest seemed to be foretold by the continual spread of the truth. The happy church thought that the day of her ultimate triumph had certainly arrived, so potent was her word by her ministers, so glorious was the Lord in the midst of her armies, that nothing could stand against her. She was "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Heresies and schisms were swept away, false gods and idols lost their thrones; Jehovah Omnipotent was in the midst of his church, and he upon the white horse rode forth conquering and to conquer. Before long, however, if you read history, you find it always has happened that there came an ebb-tide. Again the stream of grace seemed to recede, the poor church was driven back either by persecution or by internal decay; instead of gaining upon man's corruptions it seemed as if man's corruptions gained on her; and where once there had been righteousness like the waves of the sea, there was the black mud and mire of the filthiness of mankind. Mournful tunes the church had to sing, when by the rivers of Babylon she sat down and wept, remembering her former glories, and weeping her present desolation. So has it always been—progressing, retrograding, standing still awhile, and then progressing once more, and falling back again. The whole history of the church has been a history of onward marches, and then of quick retreats—a history which I believe is, on the whole, a history of advance and growth, but which read chapter by chapter, is a mixture of success and repulse, conquest and discouragement. And so I think it will be even to the last. We shall have our sunrises, our meridian noon, and then the sinking in the west; we shall have our sweet dawns of better days, our Reformations, our Luthers and our Calvins; we shall have our bright full noon-tide, when the gospel is fully preached, and the power of God is known; shall have our sunset

of ecclesiastical weakness and decay. But just as sure as the evening-tide seems to be drawing over the church, "at evening time it shall be light." Mark well that truth all through the sacred history of the church. In the day when every lamp of prophesy seemed to have ceased, when he who once thundered in the streets of Rome was burned at the stake and strangled; when Savonarola had departed, and his followers had been put to confusion, and the black clouds of Popery seemed to have quenched the sunlight of God's love and grace upon the world; in those dark dim ages when the gospel seemed to have died out, no doubt Satan whispered in himself, "The church's sunset is now come." It is evening time with her. Only a few rays are struggling from the sun of righteousness to cheer the darkness. Satan thought mayhap the world should lie for ever beneath the darkness of his dragon wing. But lo! at evening time it was light. God brought forth the solitary monk that shook the world; he raised up men to be his coadjutors and helpers; the sun rose in Germany; it shone in every land, nor have we ever had an even-tide so near to darkness since that auspicious time. Yet there have been other seasons of dark foreboding. There was a time when the church of England was sound asleep, when the various bodies of Dissenters were quite as bad, when religion degenerated into a dead formality, when no life and no power could be found in any pulpit throughout the land, but when an earnest man was so rare that he was almost a miracle. Good men stood over the ruins of our Zion, and said, "Alas, alas, for the slain of the daughter of my people! Where, where are the days of the mighty puritans who with the banner of the truth in their hand crushed a lie beneath their feet? O truth! thou hast departed; thou hast died." "No," says God, "it is evening time; and now it shall be light." There were six young men at Oxford who met together to pray those six young men were expelled for being too godly; they went abroad throughout our land, and the little leaven leavened the whole lump. Whitfield, Wesley, and their immediate successors flashed o'er the Land like lightning, in a dark night, making all men wonder whence they came and who they were; and working so great a work, that both in and out of the Establishment, the gospel came to be preached with power and vigor. At evening time God has always been pleased to send light to his church.

We may expect to see darker evening times than have ever been beheld. Let us not imagine that our civilization shall be more enduring than any other that has gone before it, unless the Lord shall preserve it. It may be that the suggestion will be realized which has so often been laughed at as folly, that one day men should sit upon the broken arches of London Bridge, and marvel at the civilization that has departed, just as men walk over the mounds of Nimroud, and marvel at cities buried there. It is just possible that all the civilization of this country may die out in blackest night; it may be that God will repeat again the great story which has been so often told—"I looked, and lo, in the vision I saw a great and terrible beast, and it ruled the nations, but lo, it passed away and was not." But if ever such things should be—if the world ever should have to return to barbarism and darkness—if instead

of what we sometimes hope for, a constant progress to the brightest day, all our hopes should be blasted, let us rest quite satisfied that “at evening time there shall be light,” that the ends of the worlds history shall be an end of glory. However red with blood, however black with sin the world may yet be, she shall one day be as pure and perfect as when she was created. The day shall come when this poor planet shall find herself unrobed of those swaddling bands of darkness that have kept her luster from breaking forth. God shall yet cause his name to be known from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof,

“And the shouts of jubilee,
Loud as mighty thunders roar,
Or the fullness of the sea,
When it breaks upon the shore,
Shall yet be heard the wide World o’er.”
“At evening time it shall be light.”

II. This rule holds equally good *in the little*, as well as *in the great*. We know that in nature the very same law that rules the atom, governs also the starry orbs.

“The very law that molds a tear,
And bids it trickle from its source,
That law preserves the earth a sphere,
And guides the planets in their course.”

It is even so with the laws of grace. “At evening time it shall be light” to the church; “at evening time it shall be light” *to every individual*. Christian let us descend to lowly things. Thou hast had thy bright days *in temporal matters*: thou hast sometimes been greatly blessed: thou canst remember the day when the calf was in the stall, when the olive yielded its fruit, and the fig-tree did not deny its harvest; thou canst recollect the years when the barn was almost bursting with the corn, and when the vat overflowed with the oil; thou rememberest when the stream of thy life was deep, and thy ship floated softly on, without one disturbing billow of trouble to molest it. Thou saidst in those days, “I shall see no sorrow; God hath hedged me about; he hath preserved me; he hath kept me; I am the darling of his providence; I know that all things work together for my good, for I can see it is plainly so.” Well, Christian, thou hast after that had a sunset; the sun which shone so brightly, began to cast his rays in a more oblique manner every moment, until at last the shadows were long, for the sun was setting, and the clouds began to gather; and though the light of God’s countenance tinged those clouds with glory, yet it was waxing dark. Then troubles lowered o’er thee; thy family sickened, thy wife was dead, thy crops were meager, and thy daily income was diminished, thy cupboard was no more full, thou wast wondering for thy daily bread; thou didst not know what should become of thee, mayhap thou wast brought very low; the keel of thy vessel did grate upon the rocks; there was not enough of bounty to float thy ship above the rocks of poverty. “I sink in deep mire,” thou saidst, “where there is no standing; all thy waves

and thy billows have gone over me.” What to do you could not tell; strive as you might, your strivings did but make you worse. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” You used both industry and economy, and you added “hereunto perseverance; but all in vain. It was in vain that you rose up early, and sat up late, and ate the bread of carefulness; nothing could you do to deliver yourself, for all attempts failed. You were ready to die in despair. You thought the night of your life had gathered with eternal blackness. You would not live always, but had rather depart from this vale of tears. Christian! bear witness to the truth of the maxim of the text! Was it not light with thee at evening time? The time of thine extremity was just the moment of Godly opportunity. When the tide had run out to its very furthest, then it began to turn; thine ebb had its flow; thy winter had its summer; thy sunset had its sunrise; “at evening time it was light.” On a sudden by some strange work of God, as thou didst think it then, thou wast completely delivered. He brought out thy righteousness like the light, and thy glory as the noon-day. The Lord appeared for thee in the days of old: he stretched out his hand from above; he drew thee out of deep waters; he set thee upon a rock and established thy goings. Mark, thou then, O heir of heaven! what hath been true to thee in the years that are past, shall be true to thee even till the last. Art thou this day exercised with woe, and care, and misery? Be of good cheer! In thine “evening time it shall be light.” If God chooseth to prolong thy sorrow, he shall multiply thy patience; but the rather, it may be, he will bring thee into the deeps, and thence will he lead thee up again. Remember thy Saviour descended that he might ascend: so must thou also stoop to conquer; and if God bids thee stoop, should it be to the very lowest hell, remember, if he bade thee stoop, he will bring thee up again. Remember what Jonah said—“Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest me.” Oh! exclaim with him of old, who trusted his God when he had nothing else to trust: “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Do thou so, and be blessed; for “at evening time it shall be light.”

III. But now we seek a third illustration from *the spiritual sorrows of God’s own people*. Godly children have two kinds of trials, trials temporal and trials spiritual. I shall be brief on this point, and shall borrow an illustration from good John Bunyan. You remember John Bunyan’s description of Apollyon meeting Christian. Bunyan tells it figuratively, but it is no figure: he that hath ever met Apollyon will tell you that there is no mistake about the matter, but that there is a dread reality in it. Our Christian met Apollyon when he was in the valley of humiliation, and the dragon did most fiercely beset him; with fiery darts he sought to destroy him, and take away his life. The brave Christian stood to him with all his might, and used his sword and shield right manfully, till his shield became studded with a forest of darts, and his hand did cleave unto his sword. You remember how for many an

hour that man and that dragon fought together, till at last the dragon gave Christian a horrible fall, and down he went upon the ground; and woe worth the day! at the moment when he fell he dropped his sword! You have but to picture the scene: the dragon drawing up all his might, planting his foot upon Christian's neck, and about to hurl the fiery dart into his heart. "Aha! I have thee now," saith he, "thou art in my power." Strange to say, "at evening time it was light." At the very moment when the dragon's foot was enough to crush the very life out of poor Christian, it is said, he did stretch out his hand; he grasped his sword, and giving a desperate thrust at the dragon, he cried, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; for when I fall I shall arise again;" and so desperately did he cut the dragon that he spread his wings and flew away and Christian went on his journey rejoicing in his victory. Now, the Christian understands all that! it is no dream to him. He has been under the dragon's foot many a time. Ah! and all the world put on a man's heart at once is not equal in weight to one foot of the devil. When Satan once gets the upper hand of the spirit, he neither wants strength, nor will, nor malice, to torment it. Hard is that man's lot, that has fallen beneath the hoof of the evil one in his fight with him. But blessed be God, the child of God is ever safe, as safe beneath the dragon's foot as he shall be before the throne of God in heaven. "At evening time it shall be light." And let all the powers of earth and hell, and all the doubts and fears that the Christian ever knew, conspire together to molest a saint, in that darkest moment, lo, God shall arise and his enemies shall be scattered, and he shall get unto himself the victory. O for faith to believe that. O! for confidence in God never to doubt him, but in the darkest moment of our sorrows, still to feel all is well with us. "At evening time it shall be light."

IV. Bear with me whilst I just hint at one more particular, and then I will come to that upon which I intend to dwell mainly at the last. To *the sinner when coming to Christ* this is also a truth. "At evening time it shall be light." Very often when I am sitting to see inquirers, persons have come to me to tell me the story of their spiritual history; and they tell me their little tale with an air of the greatest possible wonder, and ask me as soon as they have told it whether it is not extremely strange. "Do you know, sir, I used to be so happy in the things of the world, but conviction entered into my heart, and I began to seek the Saviour; and do you know that for a long time, sir, when I was seeking the Saviour I was so miserable that I could not bear myself? Surely sir, this is a strange thing." And when I have looked them in the face, and said, "No, it is not strange; do you know I have had a dozen to-night, and they have all told me the same; that is the way all God's people go to heaven," they have stared at me as if they did not think I would tell them an untruth, but as if they thought it the strangest thing in all the world that anybody else should have felt as they have felt. "Now, sit down," I say sometimes, "and I will tell you what were my feelings when I first sought the Saviour." "Why, sir," they say, "that is just how I felt; but I did not think any one ever went the same path that I have gone." Ah! well, it is no wonder that when we hold little acquaintance with each other in spiritual things our path should seem to be solitary; but he

who knows much of the dealings of God with poor seeking sinners, will know that their experience is always very much alike, and you can generally tell one by another, while they are coming to Christ. Now, whenever the soul is truly seeking Christ it will have to seek him in the dark. When poor Lot ran out of Sodom, he had to run all the way in the twilight. The sun did not rise upon him until he got into Zoar. And so when sinners are running from their sins to the Saviour they have to run in the dark. They get no comfort and no peace, till they are enabled by simple faith to look for all to him who died upon the cross. I have in my presence this morning many poor souls under great distress. Poor heart! my text is a comfort to thee. "At evening time it shall be light." You had a little light once, the light of morality; you thought you could do something for yourself. That is all put out now. Then you had another light: you had the wax taper of ceremonies, and you thought full sure that it would light you; but that is all out now. Still you thought you could grope your way a little by the remaining twilight of your good works, but all that seems to have gone now. You think "God will utterly destroy such a wretch as I am! O sir! O sir!

'I the chief of sinners am.'"

There never lived a wretch so vile; or if there ever lived such an one, surely God must have cast him into hell at once; I am certain there is no hope for me. Why, sir, do what I may, I can not make myself any better. When I try to pray I find I can't pray as I should like; when I read the Bible it is all black against me; it is no use, when I go to the house of God the minister seems to be like Moses, only preaching the law to me—he never seems to have a word of comfort to my soul. Well, I am glad of it, poor heart, I am glad of it; far be it from me to rejoice in thy miseries as such, but I am glad thou art where thou art. I remember what the Countess of Huntingdon once said to Mr. Whitfield's brother. Mr. Whitfield's brother was under great distress of mind, and one day when sitting at tea, talking of spiritual things, he said, "Your ladyship, I know I am lost, I am certain I am!" Well, they talked to him, and they tried to rally him; but he persisted in it, that he was absolutely undone, that he was a lost man. Her ladyship clapped her hands, and said, "I am glad of it, Mr. Whitfield, I'm glad of it." He thought it was a cruel thing for her to say. He knew better when she explained herself by saying, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost; so then, he came to seek and to save you. Now, if there be any here who are lost, I can only say, I am glad of it too, for such the mighty Shepherd came to rescue. If there are any of you who feel that you are condemned by God's law, I thank God you are; for those who are condemned by the law in their consciences shall yet be pardoned by the gospel.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
To Christ, and heal your wounds;
This is the glorious gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

Nay, this very hour, when you have no day in your heart, when you think the evening time has come, and you must perish for ever—now is the time when God will reveal himself to you. Whilst thou hast a rag of thine own thou shalt never have Christ; whilst thou hast a farthing of thine own righteousness, thou shalt never have him; but when thou art nothing, Christ is thine; when thou hast nothing of thyself to trust to, Jesus Christ in the gospel is thy complete saviour; he bids me tell thee he came to seek and to save such as thou art.

V. And now I am about to close, dwelling rather more largely upon the last particular—“At evening time it shall be light.” If our sun do not go down ere it be noon, we may all of us expect to have an evening time of life. Either we shall be taken from this world by death, or else, if God should spare us, ere long we shall get to the evening of life. In a few more years, the sere and yellow leaf will be the fit companion of every man and every woman. Is there anything melancholy in that? I think not. The time of old age, with all its infirmities, seems to me to be a time of peculiar blessedness and privilege to the Christian. To the worldly sinner, whose zest for pleasure has been removed by the debility of his powers and the decay of his strength, old age must be a season on tedium and pain; but to the veteran soldier of the cross, old age must assuredly be a time of great joy and blessedness. I was thinking the other evening, whilst riding in a delightful country, how like to evening time old age is. The sun of hot care has gone down; that sun which shone upon that early piety of ours, which had not much depth of root, and which scorched it so that it died—that sun which scorched our next true godliness, and often made it well nigh wither, and would have withered it had it not been planted by the rivers of water—that sun is now set. The good old man has no particular care now in all the world. He says to business, to the hum and noise and strife of the age in which he lives, “Thou art nought to me; to make my calling and election sure, to hold firmly this my confidence, and wait until my change comes, this is all my employment; with all your worldly pleasures and cares I have no connection.” The toil of his life is all done, he has no more now to be sweating and toiling, as he had in his youth and manhood; his family have grown up, and are now no more dependent upon him; it may be, God has blessed him, and he has sufficient for the wants of his old age, or it may be that in some rustic alms-house he breathes out the last few years of his existence. How calm and quiet! Like the laborer, who, when he returns from the field at evening time casts himself upon his couch, so does the old man rest from his labors. And at evening time we gather into families, the fire is kindled, the curtains are drawn, and we sit around the family fire, to think no more of the things of the great rumbling world; and even so in old age, the family and not the world are the engrossing topic.

Did you ever notice how venerable grandsires, when they write a letter, fill it full of intelligence concerning their children? “John is ill,” “Mary is well,” “all our family are in health.” Very likely some business friend writes to say “Stocks are down,” or, “the rate of interest is raised,” but you never find *that* in any good old man’s letters; he writes about his

family, his lately married daughters, and all that. Just what we do at evening time; we only think of the family circle and forget the world. That is what the gray-headed old man does. He thinks of his children, and forgets all beside. Well, then, how sweet it is to think that for such an old man there is light in the darkness! "At evening time it shall be light." Dread not thy days of weariness, dread not thine hours of decay, O soldier of the cross; new lights shall burn when the old lights are quenched; new candles shall be lit when the lamps of life are dim. Fear not! The night of thy decay may be coming on, but "at evening time it shall be light." At evening time the Christian has many lights that he never had before; lit by the Holy Spirit and shining by his light. There is the light of bright experience. He can look back, and he can raise his Ebenezer, saying, "Hither, by thy help I've come." He can look back at his old Bible, the light of his youth, and he can say, "This promise has been proved to me, this covenant has been proved true. I have thumbed my Bible many a year; I have never yet thumbed a broken promise. The promises have all been kept to me; 'not one good thing has failed.'" And then, if he has served God he has another light to cheer him: he has the light of the remembrance of what good God has enabled him to do. Some of his spiritual children come in and talk of times when God blessed his conversation to their souls. He looks upon his children, and his children's children, rising up to call the Redeemer blessed; at evening time he has a light. But at the last the night comes in real earnest; he has lived long enough, and he must die. The old man is on his bed; the sun is going down, and he has no more light. "Throw up the windows, let me look for the last time into the open sky," says the old man. The sun has gone down; I can not see the mountains yonder; they are all a mass of mist; my eyes are dim, and the world is dim too. Suddenly a light shoots across his face, and he cries, "O daughter! daughter, here! I can see another sun rising. Did you not tell me that the sun went down just now? Lo, I see another; and where those hills used to be in the landscape, those hills that were lost in the darkness, daughter, I can see hills that seem like burning brass; and methinks upon that summit I can see a city bright as jasper. Yes, and I see a gate opening, and spirits coming forth. What is that they say? O they sing! they sing! Is this death?" And ere he has asked the question, he hath gone where he needs not to answer it, for death is all unknown. Yes, he has passed the gates of pearl; his feet are on the streets of gold; his head is bedecked with a crown of immortality; the palm-branch of eternal victory is in his hand. God hath accepted him in the beloved.

"Far from the world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,"

he is numbered with the saints in light, and the promise is fulfilled, "At evening time it shall be light."

And now, my gray-headed hearer, will it be so with thee? I remember the venerable Mr. Jay once in Cambridge, when preaching, reaching out his hand to an old man who sat just as some of you are sitting there, and saying, "I wonder whether those gray hairs are a crown

of glory, or a fool's cap; they are one or else the other." For a man to be unconverted at the age to which some of you have attained is indeed to have a fool's cap made of gray hairs; but if you have a heart consecrated to Christ, to be his children now, with the full belief that you shall be his for ever, is to have a crown of glory upon your brows.

And now, young men and maidens, we shall soon be old. In a little time our youthful frame shall totter; we shall need a staff by-and-by. Years are short things; they seem to us to get shorter, as each one of them runs o'er our head. My brother, thou art young as I am; say, hast thou a hope that thine even-tide shall be light? No, thou hast begun in drunkenness; and the drunkard's eventide is darkness made more dark, and after it damnation. No, young man; thou hast begun thy life with profanity, and the swearer's even-tide hath no light, except the lurid flame of hell. Beware thou of such an even-tide as that! No; thou hast begun in gayety; take care lest that which begins in gayety ends in eternal sadness. Would God ye had all begun with Christ! Would that ye would choose wisdom; for "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Some religious men are miserable; but religion does not make them so. True religion is a happy thing. I never knew what the hearty laugh and what the happy face meant, till I knew Christ; but knowing him I trust I can live in this world like one who is not of it, but who is happy in it. Keeping my eye upward to the Saviour, I can say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." and bless him most of all for this, that I know how to bless him. Ah! and if ye in your prime, in the days of your youth, have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to consecrate yourselves to God, you will, when you come to the end, look back with some degree of sorrow upon your infirmities, but with a far greater degree of joy upon the grace which began with you in childhood, which preserved you in manhood, which matured you for your old age, and which at last gathered you like a shock of corn fully ripe into the garner. May the great God and Master bless these words to us each, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CAUTION.

A spurious and very incorrect edition of Mr. Spurgeon's Sermons having appeared, persons regularly purchasing the "New Park Street Pulpit" are cautioned against purchasing any Sermons without the heading "New Park Street Pulpit," which is the only authorized edition.

The Security of the Church

A Sermon

(No. 161)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 1, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.” — [Psalm 125:2](#).

THE CHANGES of society may well illustrate the immutability of God. In the days of David, Jerusalem was looked upon as an impregnable fortress. It is surrounded by a natural rampart of hills; and appears to lie in the center of an amphitheatre raised purposely for its defense. By the ancient Jew it was considered to be an impregnable citadel. How changed now are the manners of war! A small troop could easily take the city, and it must indeed be a strong army that would be able to garrison it in its present condition. Yet whilst Jerusalem is changed, and the figure has become inappropriate, Jerusalem's God remains, for with him is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” We must this morning consider the text, not as we should understand it in our day, but as we should have understood it in David's time. David looked upon the city of Jerusalem, and he thought within himself, “No army can ever be able to surprise this city, and however numerous may be the invading hosts, my people will always be able to hold their own in the midst of a city so firmly fortified both by nature and by art.” In his time, indeed, and in the time of his son Solomon, I suppose it would have been utterly impossible for any enemy, possessed only of the tactics of ancient warfare, to have scaled those mighty ramparts of earth which God had piled about the city. And therefore, when David said in his day, “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people;” he meant this—“As Jerusalem is fortified by the mountains, so are God's people castled in the covenant, fortified in the Omnipotence of God, and therefore they are impregnably secure. We shall thus understand the text, and endeavor this morning to work out the great thought of the security of God's people in the arms of Jehovah their Lord.

We shall consider the text, first, *as relating to the Church as a whole*, and then we shall endeavor to note *how it applies to every individual in particular*.

I. FIRST, THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE is secured by God beyond the reach of harm. She is ably garrisoned by Omnipotence, and she is castled within the faithful engagements of the covenant. How often has the Church been attacked; but how often has she been victorious? The number of her battles is just the number of her victories. Foes have come against her; they have compassed her about, they have compassed her about like bees, but in the name of God she has destroyed them. The bull of Bashan and the dog of Belial, the mighty

and the insignificant, have all conspired to overthrow the Church; but he that sitteth in heaven hath laughed at them, the Lord hath had them in derision, and his church hath been as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but which abideth for ever. Turn ye now to the roll of history and read how the Church has been fortified by God, when fiercely attacked by men.

1. *Persecution* has unsheathed its bloody sword, and sought to rend up the Church by its roots, or fell it with its axe. Tyrants have heated their furnaces, have prepared their racks, have erected their stakes, the martyrs of Christ have been dragged by thousands to a terrible death, the confessors have had to stand forth at the risk of their lives, protesting the gospel of God against the dominant of the times. The little flock has been scattered hither and thither, and the dogs of persecution have worried them in every corner whither they have fled. Into every nation of the earth have they wandered; in sheepskins and goatskins have they been clothed; their houses have been in the rocks and their sleeping places in the caves of the earth. Like the stag pursued by the hounds, they have not had a moment's space for so much as to take their breath. But has the Church been subdued? Has she ever been overcome? O God, thou hast proved the invincibility of thy truth; thou hast manifested the power of thy Word, for thou hast not only preserved thy Church in the time of greatest trouble, but, blessed be thy name thou hast made the hour of her peril the hour of her greatest triumph. You will find that whenever the Church has been the most persecuted she has been the most successful. The heathen Pro-consuls wondered when they saw the many who were prepared to die. They said, "Surely a madness must have seized upon mankind, that they cannot be content to commit suicide, but are so fond of death that they must come to our bar and plead that they are lovers of Christ as if they sought to compel us to execute them." God gave grace for the moment and in the day of persecution he braced the nerves of his people, and made them mighty to do or die, as God would have it. But, surely, had not Christ's Church been surrounded by the mountains of God's Omnipotence, she must have fallen a prey to her numerous enemies.

2. But by-and-by the devil grew wiser. He saw that overt persecution would not suffice for the putting down of God's Church, and he therefore adopted another measure not less cruel but more crafty. "I will not only slay them," said he, "I will *malign* them." Did you ever read in history the horrible reports which were set afloat in the early ages of Christianity concerning the Christians. I dare not tell you with what vices the early Christians were charged in their private assemblies. It is certain that they were the purest and most virtuous of men, but never were men so fearfully belied. The very heathens who revelled in vice, despised the followers of Jesus on account of crimes which the voice of the liar had laid to their charge. A few years elapsed and the mud which had been cast upon the snow-white garments of Christ's Church fell off from them, leaving them whiter than before, the clouds that sought to obscure the light of the heaven of the gospel were blown away, and "fair as

the moon and clear as the sun” the innocence of Christ’s Church shone forth again. But the devil has adopted the same plan in every period. He has always sought to slander any race of Christians who are the means of revival. I would not believe any minister to be eminently successful, if I were informed that everybody praised him. I am certain that such a case would be an exception, a glaring exception to all the rules of history. You remember what was said of Whitfield in his day. He was charged with crimes that Sodom never knew; and yet a more pure and heavenly man God never sent to tread this wicked earth. And it ever must be so. The Church struggling with sin and wickedness, must through the enmity of the evil one find herself bespattered and besmeared with slander. The wicked when they can do nothing else against the righteous, will spit falsehood on them. But has the Church suffered through their slander, or hath ever a solitary Christian lost aught by it? No, the Lord God who set the mountains round about Jerusalem has so put himself about his people, that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against us in judgment we shall condemn. This is the heritage of the people of the Lord. Fear not, O Church of Christ, the slimy serpent of slander for even in thy cradle, like Hercules, when the snakes of slander came against thee thou didst slay them in thine infantile grasp, more than a conqueror through him that loved thee. And now that God is with thee, and the shout of a king in thy midst, fear not, though all men should speak against thee, thy Master will yet honor thee, and thou wilt come up from the pool of slander like a sheep from the washing, the fairer for thy black baptism, the more admired, the more lovely for all the scorn and ignominy that men have cast upon thee.

3. Again, Satan learned wisdom, and he said, “Now inasmuch as I cannot destroy this people, neither by sword nor slander, lo, this will I do, I will send into their midst wolves in sheeps clothing, I will inspire divers *heretics*, carried away with their own lusts, who shall in the midst of the church promulgate lies and prophecy smooth things in the name of the Lord. And Satan has done all this with a vengeance. In every era of the church there have been numberless bands of heretics. Only a small company have in certain times adhered to the truth, whilst the mass of professing Christians have gone aside and have perished in the gainsaying of Korah. Look at the earliest days of Christianity. Scarcely were the apostles in their graves, and their souls in paradise, than there sprang up men who denied the Lord that bought them—some who did evil that good might come, whose damnation was just. Heresies of all kinds began to spring up, even in the first fifty years after the departure of our Master. Since that time the world has been very prolific of every shape and form of doctrine except the truth, and down to these modern times heresies have prevailed. Now behold how Satan seeks to quench the light of Israel. There is the heresy of Rome, she that sitteth upon many waters seeketh as far as she can to delude the Church, and to draw the rest of the world aside from the truth of God. She, with all the craft of hell, seeketh to proselyte where’er she may from those who are the professed followers of the truth; she will change

her shape in every land; in her own dominions she will build the dungeon, and practice intolerance—in a land of freedom she can plead for liberty, and pretend to be its warmest friend. Base harlot that she is, her whoredoms have not yet ceased, nor is the cup of her fornications full. She seeketh still to devour the nations and swallow them up quick. There is her sister the Puseyism of the Church of England, I speak nothing now concerning my evangelical brethren. God Almighty shield them and bless them! My only marvel is, that they do not come out altogether, and touch not the unclean thing. But, alas, Puseyism is seeking to eat out the very vitals of our godliness, telling the masses that the priest is everything—putting down Christ and exalting the man, putting baptismal water in the place of the influences of the Divine Spirit, and exalting sacraments into the place which is only to be held by the Lord our God. Truly this dangerous and deceptive, beautiful and foolish system of religion is much to be feared, although we know that the true Church of God must ever be safe, for against her the gates of hell shall not prevail.

Alas! that we should have to say something else! and this concerning those who are commonly called evangelical, who have a form of error more insidious and evil still. Alas that I should have to “cry aloud and spare not,” concerning these matters. These are days when a false charity would have us hold our tongues against the evils that we hate. My brethren, in the midst of our dissenting churches especially there is a system which does not deserve the name of system, except from its systematic desire to crush every system. There is a system springing up which takes out of the Gospel every truth that makes it precious plucks every jewel out of the crown of the Redeemer, and tramples it under the foot of men. In a large number of our pulpits at this time you will not hear the Gospel preached by a month together. Anything else you like you may hear preached: Anti-state Churchism, political affairs—these are the current staple of the day; Christ and him crucified may go to the dogs for them. Politics fill up the pulpits, and philosophy stands in the place of theology. And when there is a little theology, what say they? Instead of exalting the Holy Spirit as the first and prime agent, they are ever exhorting men to do what only God’s Spirit can do for them, and not reminding them that the effectual grace of God is necessary; the covenant, the “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure” is sneered at the banner once held so manfully by Calvin, who took it from the hand of Augustine leaping over centuries to grasp it, who again received it from the hand of the apostle Paul—the banner of the old fashioned truth is to a great degree furled, and we are told that these old doctrines are effete and out of date. Puritanical divinity, they say, is not the divinity for these times; we must have a new gospel for a go-a-head era. We must have sermons preached which, if they be not absolute denial of every doctrine of the gospel, are at least sneers at them all. The man effects to be so supremely wise, that he in his own brain can devise a gospel better, fairer than the ancient gospel of the blessed God, Now, this is one of the attempts of the enemy

to put down the truth, but he will never be able to do it, for “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.”

I will not be hard, but I must say a word to many of my brethren of the denomination to which I belong. There are many of you call yourselves Particular Baptists, by which you mean that you are Calvinists, and yet, gentlemen, your consciences are easy, and some of you have never preached upon election since you were ordained. The peculiarities of “the five points” are concealed. These things, you say, are offensive. And so, gentlemen, you would rather offend God than you would offend man. But you reply, “These things, you know, are high doctrines; they had better not be preached: they will not be practical.” I do think that the climax of all man’s blasphemy is centred in that utterance. Will you dare to say, “There are some parts of God’s truth that we do not want to preach to the people.” Tell me that God put a thing in the Bible that I am not to preach! You are finding fault with my God. But you say, “It will be dangerous.” What! God’s truth dangerous? I should not like to stand in your shoes when you have to face your Maker on the day of judgment after such an utterance as that. If it be not God’s truth, let it alone; but if you believe the thing, out with it. The world will like you just as well for being honest, and if the world does not your Master will. Keep back nothing; tell the whole gospel out. Tell out man’s responsibility: do not stutter at it. Tell out divine sovereignty: do not refuse to talk of election, use the word, even if they sneer, tell men that if they believe not the blood is on their own heads, and then if the high people turn against you, snap your finger in their face; tell them you do not care—that to you it is *nothing, nothing* at all to please man; your Master is in heaven, and him will you please, come fair, come foul. This done, Satan would be balked and defeated; but at the present moment, he is mightily striving thus to overthrow the church by ill doctrine.

4. The craftiest invention of the devil, with which he seeks, in the last place to put out the church, is a device which has amazed me above every other. “Now;” says Satan, “If I can quench the church, neither by persecution, nor slander, nor heresy, I will invent another mode of destroying her.” And I have often marveled at the depths of deceit which are centred in this last invention of Satan. Satan seeks to divide the church, to set us apart from one another, and not allow those who love the same truth to meet with each other and to work together in love, and peace, and harmony. “Now;” says the devil, “I have it. Here is one body of good men—they are very fond of one part of God’s truth. Now, there are two sets of truths in the Bible. One set deals with man as responsible creature, the other class of truths deals with God as the infinite Sovereign, dispensing his mercy as he pleases. Now these dear brethren are very fond of man’s responsibility: they will preach it, and they will preach it so that if they hear the brother over the other side of the street preach God’s sovereignty, they will be very wroth with him. And then I will make the brethren who preach divine sovereignty forget the other part of the truth, and hate the brethren that preach it.” Do you not see the craft of the enemy? Both of these good men are right; they both preach parts of truth; but

they each so set their part of truth at the top of the other that a rivalry commences. Why, I have stepped in and heard a godly brother preach a sermon that sent my blood through my veins at a most rapid rate, whilst he earnestly preached of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come but he spoilt all his sermon by indirectly hinting—“Now, take care you don’t hear Mr. So-and-so, because he will contradict all this, and tell you that you are saved by grace, and that it is not of yourself but it is the gift of God.” I went, of course, and heard the good man, because I was told not to go. Well, he was preaching that “it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” and I thought he handled the text very manfully, when he showed that God was the author of all salvation; only in a parenthesis he told us not to go to that work-mongering shop on the other side of the road. Why, they were both right, but they had each got different parts of the truth; one, that truth which dealt with man as responsible; the other, that which deals with God as a Sovereign; and the devil had so perverted their judgment that they could not see that both things were true, but they must go fighting each other just to make sport for Satan. Now, I wonder that the church has not been utterly destroyed by this last device, for it is the craftiest thing, I believe, that Satan has yet brought under our notice, though without doubt his depths are too deep for our understanding. But, brethren, despite all this, let bigotry rave, let intolerance rail till it goes mad, the church is just as secure, for God hath set himself round about her, “even as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, from henceforth even for evermore.”

And now just notice, before we leave this point, that as the Church always has been preserved, the text assures us she always will be, *henceforth even for ever*. There is a nervous old woman here. Last Saturday night she read the newspaper, and she saw something about five or six clergymen going over to Rome: she laid down her spectacles, and she began crying, “Oh! the Church is in danger, the Church is in danger.” Ah! put your spectacles on; that is all right; never mind about the loss of those fellows. Better gone; we did not want them; do not cry if fifty more follow them, do not be at all alarmed. Some church may be in danger, but God’s Church is not. That is safe enough, that shall stand secure, even to the end. I remember with what alarm some of my friends received the tidings of the geological discoveries of modern times, which did not quite agree with their interpretation of the Mosaic history of the creation. They thought it an awful thing that science should discover something which seemed to contradict the Scriptures. Well, we lived over the geological difficulty, after all. And since then there have been different sets of philosophic infidels, who have risen up and made wonderful discoveries, and poor timid Christians have thought, “What a terrible thing! This surely will be the end of all true religion; when science can bring *facts* against us, how shall we be able to stand?” They just waited about another week, and on a sudden they found that science was not their enemy, but their friend, for the Truth though tried in a furnace like silver seven times, is ever a gainer by the trial. Ah! ye that hate the church, she shall ever be a thorn in your side! Oh! ye that would batter her walls to pieces, know

this, that she is impregnable, not one of her stakes shall be removed, not one of her cords shall be broken. God hath fixed her where she is, and by divine decree established her on a rock. Do you hate the Church? Hate on: it will never be moved by all your hate. Do you threaten to crush it? It shall crush you, but you shall never injure it. Do ye despise and laugh at it? Ah! the day is coming when the laugh shall be on the other side. Wait a little while, and when her Master shall suddenly come in his glory, then shall it be seen on whose side is the victory, and who were the fools that laughed.

Thus we have disposed of the first point; THE CHURCH impregnably secure, fortified, and castled by God.

II. What is true of the mass is true of the unit. The fact which relates to the Church includes in it EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH. God has fortified his people; so that every believer is infallibly secure. There are in the world certain people who teach that Christ gives grace to men, and tells them, "Now, you shall be saved if you will persevere; but this must be left to yourself." This reminds me of an old Puritanical illustration, "The Duke of Alva having given some prisoners their lives, they afterwards petitioned him for some food. His answer was, that, 'he would grant them life but no meat.' And they were famished to death." The deniers of final perseverance represent the Deity in a similar view. 'God promises eternal life to the saints if they endure to the end,' but he will not secure to them the continuance of that grace without which eternal life cannot be had! Oh! surely if that were true, eternal life were not worth a fig to any of us. Unless our God who first saves us did engage to keep us alive and to provide for all our necessities, of what use were eternal life at all? But we bless his name,

"Whom once he loves he never leaves,

But loves them to the end."

Once in Christ, in Christ for ever,

Nothing from his love can sever."

The Christian is fortified and secured from all harm. And yet, O child of God, there be many that will seek to destroy thee, and thy fears will often tell thee that thou art in the jaws of the enemy. *Providence* will often seem against thee, thine eyes shall be seldom dry; it may be funeral shall follow funeral. Loss shall follow loss; a burning house shall be succeeded by a blasted crop. The Christian in this world is not secured against the perils which happen to manhood. Oh! child of God, it may seem that all things are against thee; perhaps all God's waves and billows will go over thee; thou mayest know what hunger, and nakedness, and thirst do mean; thou mayest be found in this world houseless, friendless, fatherless, motherless, but oh! remember, that neither famine, nor hunger, nor poverty, nor sickness, nor weakness, nor contempt, can separate thee from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus thy Lord. Thou mayest sink ever so low, but thou canst never sink lower than the arm of God can reach. Thy poor ship may be drifted before the gale, but it shall never go so fast

but God can keep her off the rocks. Be of good cheer, the trials of this mortal life shall work out for thee “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Again, you may be *tempted* by the world! traps may be set for you on every hand, you may be tempted by your flesh, your corruptions may have great power over you, and often stagger your faith, and make you tremble, lest you should be utterly overthrown, and the devil may set upon you with fiery darts, he may pierce you with foul insinuations, he may almost make you blaspheme, and with terrible suggestions he may drive you well-nigh to despair. But oh! remember,

“Hell and thy sins obstruct thy course,
But hell and sin are vanquished foes;
Thy Jesus nailed them to his cross
And sang the triumph when he rose.”

And thou mayest, too, be overcome by *sin*. Thou mayest fall God grant thou mayest not; but though thou be kept eminently consistent and extremely virtuous, thou wilt sin and sometimes that sin will get such a head against thee that thou canst scarcely stem the torrent. Conscience will whisper, “How couldst thou be a child of God, and yet sin thus?” And Satan will howl in thine ears, “He that sinneth knoweth not God.” And so thou wilt be ready to be destroyed by thy sin. But do thou then, in the hour of thy dark distress, read this verse—“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.” Be thou confident in this, that even sin itself shall not be able to cut the golden link which joins thee to thy Saviour.

Have you never heard the sermons of those people who believe in the apostacy of the saints? Have you not heard them very pathetically enlarge on the dangers of Christians? They say, “Yes, you may serve God all your life, but perhaps in the last article of death your faith may faint, sin may prevail, and you may be destroyed.” And they illustrate their very beautiful and comfortable idea by the figure of a ship foundering just as she reaches the harbour. Now, many wooden ships, I doubt not, do founder, and many ships built in free-will dockyards founder too; but the chosen vessels of mercy are insured against perishing, and were never known to be shipwrecked yet. As an old divine says, there are no wrecks to be seen on the sea which rolls between Jerusalem on earth and Jerusalem above. There are many tempests, but never any shipwrecks. Bishop Hooker sweetly says “Blessed for ever and ever, be that mother’s child whose faith hath made him the child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars thereof may tremble under us, the countenance of the heavens may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory, but concerning the man that trusted in God, if the fire have proclaimed itself unable as much as to singe a hair of his head; if lions, beasts ravenous by nature and keen by hunger, being set to devour, have, as it were, religiously adored the very flesh of a faithful man; what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affections towards God, or the af-

fection of God to him?” Oh, when we once believe this doctrine and receive it in our hearts as true, what a tendency it has to make the spirit buoyant in the deep waters, to enable us to sing in the midst of the fierce billows. Who need fear, if our salvation is made secure by the covenant of God?

And now for a few moments, without detaining you too long, I will try to show some reasons why it is quite certain that the believer cannot by any possibility perish. I want to do this, because I have a multitude of letters from this large congregation every week, and I have to say to the glory of God, there are many of those letters that make me so glad I can scarcely contain myself, whilst others arouse all the anxiety of my heart. Among them is one something like this. “Sir, I know that I was once a child of God; many years ago I had such delightful feelings, and such ecstasies, that I cannot doubt but what if I had died then I should have gone to heaven; but now, sir, I am in such distress that I am quite sure if I were to die now I should be lost.” Now, my brother, I know you are here. You may take it to yourself. There are only two solutions to your mystery. If you were a child of God *then*, you are a child of God *now*, and if you would have gone to heaven then you will go to heaven now, be you what you may; if you ever were regenerated, regeneration is a work that is never done but once, and if it has been done once for you, it has not lost its efficacy—you are a child of God yet. But I am inclined to think you never were a child of God: you had a few fine ecstasies; but you never knew the plague of your own heart; I am afraid, young man, you were never taken into God’s stripping room, never were tied up to the halberts, and never had the ten-thonged whip of law on your back. But, anyhow, do not tell me any more that you were converted once but not now, because if you were converted to God, God would have kept you. “The righteous *shall* hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.”

And now shall I tell you why it is certain a believer cannot perish? In the first place, how can a believer perish if that Scripture be true, which saith, that every believer is a member of Christ’s body! If you will only grant me my head afloat above the water I will give you leave to drown my fingers. Try it: you cannot do it. As long as a man’s head is above the flood you cannot drown him—it is clean impossible—nor yet drown any part of his body. Now, a Christian is a part of Christ, the Head. Christ, the head of the body, is in heaven, and until you can drown the head of the body, you cannot drown the body, and if the head be in heaven, beyond the reach of harm, then every member of the body is alive and secure, and shall at last be in heaven too. Dost thou imagine, O heretic, that Christ will lose a member of his body! Will Christ dwell in heaven with a mangled frame? God forbid! If Christ hath taken us into union with himself, though we be the meanest members of his heavenly body, he will not allow us to be cut away. Will a man lose a arm, or a leg, or an hand, whilst he can help himself? Ah! no, and whilst Christ is omnipotent, nought shall pluck his children from his body, for they are of “his flesh and his bones.”

But again: how can a believer perish, and yet God be true? God has said “When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee.” Now, if they should overflow us, how can God be true? “When thou passest through the fires thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Then if we could ever find a believer consumed, we could prove God’s promise broken. But we cannot do that. God is with his children, and ever will be. Besides has he not said, “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands?” Ay, beloved, how can God be God, and yet his people plucked out of his hand? Surely he were no God to us, if he were unfaithful to a promise so oft repented and so solemnly confirmed. Besides, mark ye this. If one saint should fall away and perish, God would not only break his word, but his oath, for he hath sworn by himself, because he could swear by no greater, “that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” No, an oath-breaking God, a promise-despising Jehovah, were an impossibility; and therefore a perished child of God is alike impossible.

But we need not fear, beloved, that we shall ever perish, if we love the Saviour for the last reason is all potent. Will Christ lose that which he has bought with his own blood? Yes, there are men with judgments so perverted, that they believe Christ died for those that are damned, and bought with his own blood men that perish. Well, if they choose to believe that, I do not envy them the elasticity of their intellects; but this I conceive to be but an axiom, that what Christ has paid for so dearly with his own heart’s blood he will have. If he loved us well enough to bear the excruciating agonies of the cross, I know he loves “well enough to keep us to the end.” If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.” For I am persuaded that he that spared not his own life, but delivered it up for his people, will not withhold aught that Omnipotence can “ire.

And now I close by addressing myself for a moment or two to ungodly persons present. Thinking persons they must be, or else what I say will not be likely to be noticed by them. When I was a boy I remember having a meditation something like this: “Now, I should not like to be a thief or a murderer, or an unclean person.” I had such a training that I had an abhorrence of sin of that sort. “And yet,” thought I to myself, “I may be hung yet; there is no reason why I should not turn out a thief,” because I recollected there were some of my schoolfellows, older than I was, who had already become very eminent in dishonesty; and I thought, “why may not I?” No one can tell the rapture of my spirit, when I thought I saw in my Bible the doctrine that if I gave my heart to Christ he would keep me from sin and preserve me as long as I lived. I was not quite sure of it—not quite certain that was the truth of the Bible, though I thought so; but I remember when I heard the minister of some small hyper chapel utter the same truth. Oh! my heart was full of rapture; I panted after that gospel.

“Oh!” I thought, if God would but love me, if I might but know myself to be his!” For the enchanting part of it was, that if I were so he would keep me to the end. That made me so in love with the gospel, that boy as I was, knowing nothing savingly about the gospel, it made me love the thought of being saved, because, if saved, God would never turn me out of doors. That made the gospel very precious to me in my childhood; so that when the Holy Spirit showed me my guilt and led me to seek a Saviour, that doctrine was like a bright star to my spirit. I always looked forward to that. I thought, “Well, if I can once look to Christ, and cast myself on him, then he will grant me grace that I shall to the end endure.” And oh! that doctrine is so precious to me now, that I do think if anybody could possibly convince me that final perseverance is not a truth of the Bible, I should never preach again, for I feel I should have nothing worth preaching. If you could once make me believe that the regeneration of God might fail of its effect, and that the love of God might be separated from his own chosen people, you might keep that Bible to yourself; between its cover there is nothing that I love, nothing that I wish for, no gospel that is suitable for me. I count it to be a gospel beneath the dignity of God, and beneath the dignity of even fallen manhood, unless it be everlasting, “ordered in all things and sure.”

And now poor trembling sinner, thou that knowest thy sins, believe on Christ this morning, and thou art saved, and saved for ever. Do but this moment look to him that died upon the tree, and, my brother, my sister, give me thine hand, and let us weep for joy that thou believest, and let our joy accumulate when we remember that the pillars of the heavens may totter, the solid foundations of the earth may reel, the countenance of the heavens may be astonished, the sun may be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, but nought shall pluck thee from the strength of Israel’s hands. Thou art, thou shalt be infallibly secure. Come, O Holy Spirit, bless these words; for Jesus sake. Amen.

The First and Great Commandment

A Sermon

(No. 162)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 8, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”—[Mark 12:30](#).

OUR SAVIOUR said, “This is the first and great commandment.” It is “*the first*” commandment—the first for *antiquity*, for this is older than even the ten commandments of the written law. Before God said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal,” this law was one of the commands of his universe; for this was binding upon the angels when man was not created. It was not necessary for God to say to the angels, “Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not steal;” for such things to them were very probably impossible; but he did doubtless say to them, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;” and when first Gabriel sprang out of his native nothingness at the fiat of God, this command was binding on him. This is “the first commandment,” then, for antiquity. It was binding upon Adam in the garden; even before the creation of Eve, his wife, God had commanded this; before there was a necessity for any other command this was written upon the very tablets of his heart—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.”

It is “the first commandment,” again, not only for antiquity, but for *dignity*. This command, which deals with God the Almighty must ever take precedence of every other. Other commandments deal with man and man, but *this* with man and his Creator. Other commands of a ceremonial kind, when disobeyed, may involve but slight consequences upon the person who may happen to offend, but this disobeyed provokes the wrath of God, and brings his ire at once upon the sinner’s head. He that stealeth committeth a gross offense, inasmuch as he hath also violated this command; but if it were possible for us to separate the two, and to suppose an offense of one command without an offence of this, then we must put the violation of this commandment in the first rank of offences. This is the king of commandments; this is the emperor of the law; it must take precedence of all those princely commands that God afterwards gave to men.

Again, it is “the first commandment,” for its *justice*. If men can not see the justice of that law which says, “Love thy neighbor,” if there be some difficulty to understand how I can be bound to love the man that hurts and injures me, there can be no difficulty here. “Thou shalt love thy God” comes to us with so much Divine authority, and is so ratified by the dictates of nature and our own conscience, that, verily, this command must take the first place for the justice of its demand. It is “the first” of commandments. Whichever law thou

dost break, take care to keep this. If thou breakest the commandments of the ceremonial law, if thou dost violate the ritual of thy church, thine offence might be propitiated by the priest, but who can escape when this is his offence? This mandate standeth fast. Man's law thou mayest break, and bear the penalty; but if thou breakest this the penalty is too heavy for thy soul to endure; it will sink thee, man, it will sink thee like a mill-stone lower than the lowest hell. Take heed of this command above every other, to tremble at it and obey it, for it is "the first commandment."

But the Saviour said it was a "great commandment," and so also it is. It is "great," for it containeth in its bowels every other. When God said, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day;" when he said, "Thou shalt not bow down unto the idols nor worship them,"—when he said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," he did not instance particulars which are all contained in this general mandate. This is the sum and substance of the law; and indeed even the second commandment lies within the folds of the first "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," is actually to be found within the center of this command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" for the loving of God would necessarily produce the loving of our neighbor.

It is a great command, then, for its *comprehensiveness*, and it is a great command for the immense demand which it makes upon us. It demands all our mind, all our soul, all our heart, and all our strength. Who is he that can keep it, when there is no power of manhood which is exempt from its sway? And to him that violateth this law it shall be proven that it is a great command in the greatness of its condemning power, for it shall be like a great sword having two edges, wherewith God shall slay him. It shall be like a great thunderbolt from God, wherewith he shall cast down and utterly destroy the man that goeth on in his willful breaking thereof. Hear ye, then, O Gentiles, and O house of Israel, hear ye, then, this day, this first and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

I shall divide my discourse thus—first, *What saith this commandment unto us?* secondly, *What say we unto it?*

I. And in discussing the first point, WHAT SAITH THIS COMMANDMENT UNTO US? we shall divide it thus. Here is, first, the duty—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" here is, secondly, the measure of the duty—"Thou shalt love him with all thy heart, mind, soul, strength;" here is, thirdly, the ground of the claim, enforcing the duty—because he is "thy God." God demandeth of us to obey, simply upon the ground that he is our God.

1. To begin, then. This command *demandeth a duty*. That duty is, that we should love God. How many men do break this? One class of men do break it willfully and grievously; for they *hate* God. There is the infidel, who gnashes his teeth against the Almighty; the atheist, who spits the venom of his blasphemy against the person of his Maker. You will find those who rail at the very being of a God, though in their consciences they know there

is a God, yet with their lips will blasphemously deny his existence. These men say there is no God, because they wish there were none. The wish is father to the thought, and the thought demands great grossness of heart, and grievous hardness of spirit before they dare to express it in words; and even when they express it in words, it needeth much practice ere they can do it with a bold, unblushing countenance. How this command beareth hard on all them that hate, that despise, that blaspheme, that malign God, or that deny his being, or impugn his character. O sinner! God says thou shalt love him with all thy heart; and inasmuch as thou hatest him thou standest this day condemned to the sentence of the law.

Another class of men know there is a God, but they *neglect* him; they go through the world with indifference, “caring for none of these things.” “Well,” they say, “It does not signify to me whether there is a God or not.” They have no particular care about him; they do not pay one half so much respect to his commands as they would to the proclamation of the Queen. They are very willing to reverence all powers that be, but he who ordained them is to be passed by and to be forgotten. They would not be bold enough and honest enough to come straight out, and despise God, and join the ranks of his open enemies, but they forget God; he is not in all their thoughts. They rise in the morning without a prayer, they rest at night without bending the knee, they go through the week’s business and they never acknowledge a God. Sometimes they talk about good luck and chance, strange deities of their own brain; but God, the over-ruling God of Providence, they never talk of, though sometimes they may mention his name in flippancy, and so increase their transgressions against him. O ye despisers and neglecters of God! this command speaks to you—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

But I hear one of these gentlemen reply, “Well, sir, I make no pretensions to religion, but still I believe I am quite as good as those that do; I am quite as upright, quite as moral and benevolent. True, I do not often darken the door of a church or chapel, I do not think it necessary, but I am a right good sort; there are many, many hypocrites in the church, and therefore I shall not think of being religious.” Now, my dear friend, allow me just to say one word—what business is that of yours? Religion is a personal matter between you and your Maker. Your Maker says—“Thou shalt love me with all thine heart:” it is of no use for you to point your finger across the street, and point at a minister whose life is inconsistent, or at a deacon who is unholy, or to a member of the church who does not live up to his profession. You have just nothing to do with that. When your Maker speaks to you, he appeals to you personally; and if you should tell him, “My Lord, I will not love thee, because there are hypocrites,” would not your own conscience convince you of the absurdity of your reasoning? Ought not your better judgment to whisper “Inasmuch, then, as so many are hypocrites, take heed that thou art not; and if there be so many pretenders who injure the Lord’s cause by their lying pretensions, so much the more reason why thou shouldst have the real thing and help to make the church sound and honest.” But no, the merchants of our cities, the

tradesmen of our streets, our artisans and our workmen, the great mass of them, live in total forgetfulness of God. I do not believe that the heart of England is infidel. I do not believe that there is any vast extent of deism or atheism throughout England: the great fault of our time is the fault of indifference; people do not care whether the thing is right or not. What is it to them? They never take the trouble to search between the different professors of religion to see where the truth lies; they do not think to pay their reverence to God with all their hearts. Oh, no; they forget what God demands, and so rob him of his due. To you, to you, great masses of the population, this law doth speak with iron tongue—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

There are a class of men who are a great deal nobler than the herd of simpletons who allow the sublimities of the God-head to be concealed by their carking care for mere sensual good. There are some who do not forget that there is a God; no, they are astronomers, and they turn their eyes to heaven, and they view the stars, and they marvel at the majesty of the Creator. Or they dig into the bowels of the earth, and they are astonished at the magnificence of God’s works of yore. Or they examine the animal, and marvel at the wisdom of God in the construction of its anatomy. They, whenever they think of God, think of him with the deepest awe, with the profoundest reverence. You never hear them curse or swear: you will find that their souls are possessed of a deep awe of the great Creator. But ah! my friends, this is not enough: this is not obedience to the command. God does not say thou shalt wonder at him, thou shalt have awe of him. He asks more than that; he says, “Thou shalt love me!” Oh! thou that seest the orbs of heaven floating in the far expanse, it is something to lift thine eye to heaven, and say—

“These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty, thine this universal frame.
Thus wondrous fair; thyself, how wondrous then!
Unspeakable, who sitt’st above these Heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.”

’Tis something thus to adore the great Creator, but ’tis not all he asks. Oh! if thou couldst add to this—“He that made these orbs, that leadeth them out by their hosts, is my Father, and my heart beats with affection towards him.” Then wouldst thou be obedient, but not till then. God asks not thine admiration, but thine affection. “Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thine heart.”

There are others, too, who delight to spend time in contemplation. They believe in Jesus, in the Father, in the Spirit; they believe that there is but one God, and that these three are one. It is their delight to turn over the pages of revelation, as well as the pages of history. They contemplate God; he is to them a matter of curious study; they like to meditate upon

him; the doctrines of his Word they could hear all day long. And they are very sound in the faith, extremely orthodox, and very knowing; they can fight about doctrines, they can dispute about the things of God with all their hearts; but, alas! their religion is like a dead fish, cold and stiff, and when you take it into your hand, you say there is no life in it; their souls were never stirred with it; their hearts were never thrown into it. They can contemplate, but they cannot love; they can meditate, but they cannot commune; they can think of God, but they can never throw up their souls to him, and clasp him in the arms of their affections. Ah, to you, cold-blooded thinkers—to you, this text speaks. Oh! thou that canst contemplate, but canst not love,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.”

Another man starts up, and he says, “Well, this command does not bear on me; I attend my place of worship twice every Sunday; I have family prayer. I am very careful not to get up of a morning without saying a form of prayer; I sometimes read my Bible; I subscribe to many charities. Ah! my friend, and you may do all that, without loving God. Why, some of you go to your churches and chapels as if you were going to be horsewhipped. It is a dull and dreary thing to you. You dare not break the Sabbath, but you would, if you could. You know very well, that if it were not for a mere matter of fashion and custom, you would sooner by half be anywhere else, than in God’s house. And as for prayer, why, it is no delight to you; you do it, because you think you ought to do it. Some indefinable sense of duty rests upon you; but you have no delight in it. You talk of God with great propriety, but you never talk of him with love. Your heart never bounds at the mention of his name; your eyes never glisten at the thought of his attributes; your soul never leapeth when you meditate on his works, for your heart is all untouched, and while you are honoring God with your lips, your heart is far from him, and you are still disobedient to this commandment, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.”

And now, my hearers, do you understand this commandment? Do I not see many of you seeking to look for loop holes through which to escape? Do I not think I see some of you striving to make a breach in this divine wall which girds us all. You say, “I never do anything against God.” Nay, my friend, that is not it: it is not what thou dost not do—it is this, “Dost thou *love* him?” “Well, sir, but I never violate any of the proprieties of religion.” No, that is not it, the command is, “Thou shalt *love* him.” “Well, sir, but I do a great deal for God; I teach in a Sunday school, and so on.” Ah! I know; but dost thou *love* him? It is the heart he wants, and he will not be content without it. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.” That is the law, and though no man can keep it since Adam’s fall, yet the law is as much binding upon every son of Adam this day, as when God first of all pronounced it. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.”

2. That brings us to the second point—*the measure of this law*. How much am I to love God? Where shall I fix the point? I am to love my neighbor as I love myself. Am I to love my God more than that? Yes, certainly. The measure is even greater. We are not bound to

love ourselves with all our mind, and soul, and strength, and therefore we are not bound to love our neighbor so. The measure is a greater one. We are bound to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And, we deduce from that, first, that we are to love God *supremely*. Thou art to love thy wife, O husband. Thou canst not love her too much, except in one case, if thou shouldst love her before God, and prefer her pleasure to the pleasure of the Most High. Then wouldst thou be an idolater. Child! thou art to love thy parents; thou canst not love him too much who begat thee, nor her too much who brought thee forth; but remember, there is one law that doth override that. Thou art to love thy God more than thy father or thy mother. He demands thy first, and thy highest affection; thou art to love him “with all thy heart.” We are allowed to love our relatives: we are taught to do so. He that doth not love his own family is worse than a heathen man and a publican. But we are not to love the dearest object of our hearts, so much as we love God. Ye may erect little thrones for those whom ye rightly love; but God’s throne must be a glorious high throne; you may set them upon the steps, but God must sit on the very seat itself. He is to be enthroned, the royal One within your heart, the king of your affections. Say, say hearer, hast thou kept this commandment? I know, I have not; I must plead guilty before God; I must cast my self before him, and acknowledge my transgression. But, nevertheless, there standeth the commandment—“Thou shalt love God with all thy heart”—that is, thou shalt love him *supremely*.

Note, again, that from the text we may deduce that a man is bound to love God *heartily*: that is plain enough, for it says, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Yes, there is to be in our love to God a heartiness. We are to throw our whole selves into the love that we give to him. Not the kind of love that some people give to their fellows; when they say, “Be ye warmed and filled,” and nothing more. No: our heart is to have its whole being absorbed into God, so that God is the hearty object of its pursuit and its most mighty love. See how the word “all” is repeated again and again. The whole going forth of the being, the whole stirring up of the soul, is to be for God only. “With *all* thy heart.”

Again: as we are to love God heartily, we are to love him with *all our souls*. Then we are to love him with all our life; for that is the meaning of it. If we are called to die for God, we are to prefer God before our own life. We shall never reach the fullness of this commandment, till we get as far as the martyrs, who rather than disobey God would be cast into the furnace, or devoured by wild beasts. We must be ready to give up house, home, liberty, friends, comfort, joy, and life, at the command of God, or else we have not carried out this commandment, “Thou shalt love him with all thy heart and with all thy life.”

And, next we are to love God with all our *mind*. That is, the intellect is to love God. Now, many men believe in the existence of a God, but they do not love that belief. They know there is a God, but they greatly wish there were none. Some of you to-day would be very pleased, ye would set the bells a-ringing, if ye believed there were no God. Why, if there

were no God, then you might live just as you liked; if there were no God, then you might run riot and have no fear of future consequences. It would be to you the greatest joy that could be, if you heard that the eternal God had ceased to be. But the Christian never wishes any such a thing as that. The thought that there is a God is the sunshine of his existence. His intellect bows before the Most High; not like a slave who bends his body because he must, but like the angel who prostrates himself because he loves to adore his Maker. His intellect is as fond of God as his imagination. "Oh!" he saith, "My God, I bless thee that thou art; for thou art my highest treasure, my richest and my rarest delight. I love thee with all my intellect; I have neither thought, nor judgment, nor conviction, nor reason, which I do not lay at thy feet, and consecrate to thine honor.

And, once again, this love to God is to be characterized by *activity*; for we are to love Him with all our heart, heartily—with all our soul, that is, to the laying down of our life—with all our mind, that is mentally; and we are to love him with all our *strength*, that is, *actively*. I am to throw my whole soul into the worship and adoration of God. I am not to keep back a single hour, or a single farthing of my wealth, or a single talent that I have, or a single atom of strength, bodily or mental, from the worship of God. I am to love him with all my strength.

Now, what man ever kept this commandment? Surely, none; and no man ever can keep it. Hence, then, the necessity of a Saviour. O! that we might by this commandment be smitten to the earth, that our self-righteousness may be broken in pieces by this great hammer of "the first and great commandment!" But oh! my brethren, how may we wish that we could keep it! for, could we keep this command intact, unbroken, it would be a heaven below. The happiest of creatures are those that are the most holy, and that unreservedly love God.

3. And now, very briefly, I have just to state *God's claim* upon which he bases this commandment. "Thou shalt love him with all thy heart, soul, mind, strength." Why? First, because he is the Lord—that is, Jehovah; and secondly, because he is thy God.

Man, creature of a day, thou oughtest to love Jehovah *for what he is*. Behold, him whom thou canst not behold! Lift up thine eyes to the seventh heaven; see where in dreadful majesty, the brightness of his skirts makes the angels veil their faces, lest the light, too strong for even them, should smite them with eternal blindness. See ye him, who stretched the heavens like a tent to dwell in, and then did weave into their tapestry, with golden needle, stars that glitter in the darkness. Mark ye him who spread the earth, and created man upon it. And hear ye what he is. He is all-sufficient, eternal, self-existent, unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient! Wilt thou not reverence him? He is good, he is loving, he is kind, he is gracious. See the bounties of his providence; behold the plenitude of his grace! Wilt thou not love Jehovah, because he is Jehovah?

But thou art most of all bound to love him *because he is thy God*. He is thy God *by creation*. He made thee; thou didst not make thyself. God, the Almighty, though he might use instruments, was nevertheless the sole creator of man. Though he is pleased to bring us into

the world by the agency of our progenitors, yet is he as much our Creator as he was the Creator of Adam, when he formed him of clay and made him man. Look at this marvelous body of thine: see how God hath put the bones together, so as to be of the greatest service and use to thee. See how he hath arranged thy nerves and blood vessels: mark the marvelous machinery which he has employed to keep thee in life! O thing of an hour! wilt thou not love him that made thee? Is it possible that thou canst think of him who formed thee in his hand, and molded thee by his will, and yet wilt thou not love him who hath fashioned thee?

Again, consider, he is *thy* God, for *he preserves thee*. Thy table is spread, but he spread it for thee. The air that thou dost breathe is a gift of his charity; the clothes that thou hast on thy back are gifts of his love; thy life depends on him. One wish of his infinite will would have brought thee to the grave, and given thy body to the worms; and at this moment, though thou art strong and hearty, thy life is absolutely dependent upon him. Thou mayest die where thou art, instantly: thou art out of hell only as the result of his goodness. Thou wouldst be at this hour sweltering in flames unquenchable, had not his sovereign love preserved thee. Traitor though thou mayest be to him, an enemy to his cross and cause, yet he is thy God, so far as this, for he made thee and he keeps thee alive. Surely, thou mayest wonder that he should keep thee alive, when thou refusest to love him. Man! thou wouldst not keep a horse that did not work for thee. Would you keep a servant in your house who insulted you? Would you spread bread upon his table, and find livery for his back, if instead of doing your will and good pleasure he would be his own master, and would run counter to you? Certainly you would not. And yet here is God feeding you, and you are rebelling against him. Swearer! the lip with which you cursed your Maker is sustained by him; the very lungs that you employ in blasphemy are inspired by him with the breath of life, else you had ceased to be. O! strange that you should eat God's bread, and then lift up your heel against him; O! marvelous that ye should sit at the table of his providence and be clothed in the livery of his bounty, and yet that you should turn round and spit against high heaven, and lift the puny hand of your rebellion against the God that made you, and that preserves you in being. O, if instead of our God we had one like unto ourselves to deal with, my brethren, we should not have patience with our fellow-creatures for an hour. I marvel at God's long-suffering toward men. I see the foul-mouthed blasphemer curse his God. O God! how canst thou endure it? Why dost thou not smite him to the ground? If a gnat should torment me, should I not in one moment crush it? And what is man compared with his Maker? Not one half so great as an emmet compared with man. O! my brethren, we may well be astonished that God hath mercy upon us, after all our violations of this high command. But I stand here to-day his servant, and from myself and from you I claim for God, because he is God, because he is our God and our Creator—I claim the love of all hearts, I claim the obedience of all souls and of all minds, and the consecration of all our strength.

O people of God, I need not speak to you. You know that God is your God in a special sense; therefore you ought to love him with a special love.

II. This is what the commandment says to us. I shall be very short indeed upon the second head, which is, WHAT HAVE WE TO SAY TO IT?

What hast thou to say to this command, O man? Have I one here so profoundly brainless as to reply, "I intend to keep it, and I believe I can perfectly obey it, and I think I can get to heaven by obedience to it?" Man, thou art either a fool, or else willfully ignorant; for sure, if thou dost understand this commandment, thou wilt at once hang down thine hands, and say, "Obedience to that is quite impossible; thorough and perfect obedience to that no man can hope to reach to! Some of you think you will go to heaven by your good works, do you? This is the first stone that you are to step upon—I am sure it is too high for your reach. You might as well try to climb to heaven by the mountains of earth, and take the Himalayas to be your first step; for surely when you had stepped from the ground to the summit of Chimborazo you might even then despair of ever stepping to the height of this great commandment; for to obey this must ever be an impossibility. But remember, you can not be saved by your works, if you can not obey this entirely, perfectly, constantly, for ever.

"Well," says one, "I dare say if I try and obey it as well as I can, that will do." No, sir, it will not. God demands that you perfectly obey this, and if you do not perfectly obey it he will condemn you. "Oh!" cries one, "who then can be saved?" Ah! that is the point to which I wish to bring you. Who, then can be saved by this law? Why, no one in the world. Salvation by the works of the law is proved to be a clean impossibility. None of you, therefore, will say you will try to obey it, and so hope to be saved. I hear the best Christian in the world groan out his thoughts—"O God," saith he, "I am guilty; and shouldst thou cast me into hell I dare not say otherwise. I have broken this command from my youth up, even since my conversion; I have violated it every day; I know that if thou shouldst lay justice to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, I must be swept away for ever. Lord, I renounce my trust in the law; for by it I know I can never see thy face and be accepted. But hark! I hear the Christian say another thing. "Oh!" saith he to the commandment, "Commandment I can not keep thee, but my Saviour kept thee, and what my Saviour did, he did for all them that believe; and now, O law, what Jesus did is mine. Hast thou any question to bring against me? Thou demandest that I should keep this commandment wholly: lo, my Saviour kept it wholly for me, and he is my substitute; what I can not do myself my Saviour has done for me; thou canst not reject the work of the substitute, for God accepted it in the day when he raised him from the dead. O law! shut thy mouth for ever; thou canst never condemn me; though I break thee a thousand times, I put my simple trust in Jesus only, his righteousness is mine, and with it I pay the debt and satisfy thy hungry mouth."

"Oh!" cries one, "I wish I could say that I could thus escape the wrath of the law! Oh that I knew that Christ did keep the law for me!" Stop, then, and I will tell you. Do you feel

to-day that you are guilty, lost, and ruined? Do you with tears in your eyes confess that none but Jesus can do you good? Are you willing to give up all trusts, and cast yourself alone on him who died upon the cross? Can you look to Calvary, and see the bleeding sufferer, all crimson with streams of gore? Can you say

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
Into thine arms I fall;
Jesus, be thou my righteousness,
My Saviour and my all!”

Canst say that? Then he kept the law for you, and the law can not condemn whom Christ has absolved. If Law comes to you and says, “I will damn you because you did not keep the law,” tell him that he dares not touch a hair of your head, for though you did not keep it, Christ kept it for you, and Christ’s righteousness is yours; tell him there is the money and though you did not coin it Christ did; and tell him, when you have paid him all he asks for, he dares not touch you; you must be free, for Christ has satisfied the law.

And after that—and here I conclude—O child of God, I know what thou wilt say; after thou hast seen the law satisfied by Jesus thou wilt fall on thy knees and say, “Lord, I thank thee that this law can not condemn me, for I believe in Jesus. But now, Lord, help me from this time forth for ever to keep it. Lord, give me a new heart, for this old heart never will love thee! Lord, give me a new life, for this old life is too vile. Lord, give me a new understanding; wash my mind with the clean water of the Spirit; come and dwell in my judgment, my memory, my thought; and then give me the new strength of thy Spirit, and then will I love thee with all my new heart, with all my new life, with all my renewed mind, and with all my spiritual strength, from this time forth, even for evermore.”

May the Lord convince you of sin, by the energy of his divine Spirit, and bless this simple sermon, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

Awake! Awake!

A Sermon

(No. 163)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 15, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.”—[1 Thessalonians 5:6](#).

WHAT SAD things sin hath done. This fair world of ours was once a glorious temple, every pillar of which reflected the goodness of God, and every part of which was a symbol of good, but sin has spoiled and marred all the metaphors and figures that might be drawn from earth. It has so deranged the divine economy of nature, that those things which were inimitable pictures of virtue, goodness, and divine plenitude of blessing, have now become the figures and representatives of sin. 'Tis strange to say, but it is strangely true, that the very best gifts of God have by the sin of man become the worst pictures of man's guilt. Behold the flood! breaking forth from its fountains, it rushes across the fields, bearing plenty on its bosom; it covers them awhile, and anon it doth subside and leaves upon the plain a fertile deposit, into which the farmer shall cast his seed and reap an abundant harvest. One would have called the breaking forth of water a fine picture of the plenitude of providence, the magnificence of God's goodness to the human race; but we find that sin has appropriated that figure to itself. The beginning of sin is like the breaking forth of waters. See the fire! how kindly God hath bestowed upon us that element, to cheer us in the midst of winter's frosts. Fresh from the snow and from the cold we rush to our household fire, and there by our hearth we warm our hands, and glad are we. Fire is a rich picture of the divine influences of the Spirit, a holy emblem of the zeal of the Christian; but, alas! sin hath touched this, and the tongue called “a fire;” “it is set on fire of hell,” we are told, and it is so evidently full often, when it uttereth blasphemy and slanders; and Jude lifts up his hand and exclaims, when he looks upon the evils caused by sin, “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.” And then there is sleep, one of the sweetest of God's gifts, fair sleep

“Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.”

Sleep God hath selected as the very figure for the repose of the blessed. “They that sleep in Jesus,” saith the Scripture. David puts it amongst the peculiar gift's of grace: “So he giveth his beloved sleep.” But alas! sin could not let even this alone. Sin did over-ride even this celestial metaphor; and though God himself had employed sleep to express the excellence of the state of the blessed, yet sin must have even this profaned, ere itself can be expressed. Sleep is employed in our text as a picture of a sinful condition. “Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

With that introduction, I shall proceed at once to the text. The “sleep” of the text is *an evil to be avoided*. In the second place, the word “therefore” is employed to show us that there are *certain reasons for the avoiding of this sleep*. And since the apostle speaks of this sleep with sorrow, it is to teach us that there are some, whom he calls “others,” *over whom it is our business to lament*, because they sleep, and do not watch, and are not sober.

I. We commence, then, in the first place, by endeavoring to point out the EVIL WHICH THE APOSTLE INTENDS TO DESCRIBE UNDER THE TERM SLEEP. The apostle speaks of “others” who are asleep. If you turn to the original you will find that the word translated “others” has a more emphatic meaning. It might be rendered (and Horne so renders it) “the refuse,”—“Let us not sleep as do *the refuse*,” the common herd, the ignoble spirits, those who have no mind above the troubles of earth. “Let us not sleep as do the others,” the base ignoble multitude who are not alive to the high and celestial calling of a Christian. “Let us not sleep as do the refuse of mankind.” And you will find that the word “sleep,” in the original, has also a more emphatic sense. It signifies a deep sleep, a profound slumber; and the apostle intimates, that the refuse of mankind are now in a profound slumber. We will now try if we can explain what he meant by it.

First, the apostle meant, that the refuse of mankind *are in a state of deplorable ignorance*. They that sleep know nothing. There may be merriment in the house, but the sluggish shareth not in its gladness; there may be death in the family but no tear bedeweth the cheek of the sleeper. Great events may have transpired in the world’s history, but he wots not of them. An earthquake may have tumbled a city from its greatness, or war may have devastated a nation, or the banner of triumph may be waving in the gale, and the clarions of his country may be saluting us with victory, but he knoweth nothing.

“Their labor and their love are lost,
Alike unknowing and unknown.”

The sleeper knoweth not anything. Behold how the refuse of mankind are alike in this! Of some things they know much, but of spiritual things they know nothing; of the divine person of the adorable Redeemer they have no idea; of the sweet enjoyments of a life of piety they can not even make a guess; toward the high enthusiasms and the inward raptures of the Christian they can not mount. Talk to them of divine doctrines, and they are to them a riddle; tell them of sublime experiences, and they seem to them to be enthusiastic fancies. They know nothing of the joys that are to come; and alas! for them, they are oblivious of the evils which shall happen to them if they go on in their iniquity. The mass of mankind are ignorant; they know not; they have not the knowledge of God, they have no fear of Jehovah before their eyes; but, blind-folded by the ignorance of this world, they march on through the paths of lust to that sure and dreadful end, the everlasting ruin of their souls. Brethren, if we be saints, let us not be ignorant as are others. Let us search the Scriptures, for in them we have eternal life, for they do testify of Jesus. Let us be diligent; let not the

Word depart out of our hearts; let us meditate therein both by day and night, that we may be as the tree planted by the rivers of water. "Let us not sleep as do others."

Again, sleep pictures *a state of insensibility*. There may be much knowledge in the sleeper, hidden, stored away in his mind, which might be well developed, if he could but be awakened. But he hath no sensibility, he knoweth nothing. The burglar hath broken into the house; the gold and silver are both in the robbers hands; the child is being murdered by the cruelty of him that hath broken in; but the father slumbereth, though all the gold and silver that he hath, and his most precious child, are in the hands of the destroyer. He is unconscious, how can he feel, when sleep had utterly sealed his senses! Lo! in the street there is mourning. A fire hath just now burned down the habitation of the poor, and houseless beggars are in the street. They are crying at his window, and asking him for help. But he sleeps, and what wots he, though the night be cold, and though the poor are shivering in the blast? He hath no consciousness; he feeleth not for them. There! take the title-deed of his estate, and burn the document. There! set light to his farm-yard! burn up all that he hath in the field; kill his horse and destroy his cattle; let now the fire of God descend and burn up his sheep; let the enemy fall upon all that he hath and devour it. He sleeps as soundly as if he were guarded by the angel of the Lord.

Such are the refuse of mankind. But alas! that we should have to include in that word "refuse" the great bulk thereof! How few there are that feel spiritually! They feel acutely enough any injury to their body, or to their estate; but alas! for their spiritual concerns they have no sensation whatever! They are standing on the brink of hell, but they tremble not; the anger of God is burning against them, but they fear not; the sword of Jehovah is unsheathed, but terror doth not seize upon them. They proceed with the merry dance; they drink the bowl of intoxicating pleasure; they revel and they riot, still do they sing the lascivious song; yea, they do more than this; in their vain dreams they do defy the Most High, whereas, if they were once awakened to the consciousness of their state, the marrow of their bones would melt, and their heart would dissolve like wax in the midst of their bowels. They are asleep, indifferent and unconscious. Do what you may to them; let every thing be swept away that is hopeful, that might give them cheer when they come to die, yet they feel it not; for how should a sleeper feel anything? But, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

Again: the sleeper *cannot defend himself*. Behold yonder prince, he is a strong man, ay, and a strong man armed. He hath entered into the tent. He is wearied. He hath drunken the woman's milk; he hath eaten her "butter in a lordly dish;" he casteth himself down upon the floor, and he slumbereth. And now she draweth nigh. She hath with her hammer and her nail. Warrior! thou couldst break her into atoms with one blow of thy mighty arm; but thou canst not now defend thyself. The nail is at his ear, the woman's hand is on the hammer, and the nail hath pierced his skull; for when he slept he was defenseless. The banner

of Sisera had waved victoriously over mighty foes; but now it is stained by a woman. Tell it, tell it, tell it! The man, who when he was awake, made nations tremble, dies by the hand of a feeble woman when he sleepeth.

Such are the refuse of mankind. They are asleep; they have no power to resist temptation. Their moral strength is departed, for God is departed from them. There is the temptation to lust. They are men of sound principle in business matters, and nothing could make them swerve from honesty; but lasciviousness destroyeth them; they are taken like a bird in the snare; they are caught in a trap; they are utterly subdued. Or, mayhap, it is another way that they are conquered. They are men that would not do an unchaste act, or even think a lascivious thought, they scorn it. But they have another weak point, they are entrapped by the glass. They are taken and they are destroyed by drunkenness. Or, if they can resist these things, and are inclined neither to looseness of life nor to excess in living, yet mayhap covetousness entereth into them; by the name of prudence it slideth into their hearts, and they are led to grasp after treasure and to heap up gold, even though that gold be wrung out of the veins of the poor, and though they do suck the blood of the orphan. They seem to be unable to resist their passion. How many times have I been told by men, "I can not help it, sir, do what I may; I resolve, I re-resolve, but I do the same; I am defenseless; I can not resist the temptation!" Oh, of course you can not, while you are asleep. O Spirit of the living God! wake up the sleeper! Let sinful sloth and presumption both be startled, lest haply Moses should come their way, and finding them asleep should hang them on the gallows of infamy for ever.

Now, I come to give another meaning to the word "sleep." I hope there have been some of my congregation who have been tolerable easy whilst I have described the first three things, because they have thought that they were exempt in those matters. But sleep signifies also *inactivity*. The farmer can not plow his field in his sleep, neither can he cast the grain into the furrows, nor watch the clouds, nor reap his harvest. The sailor can not reef his sail, nor direct his ship across the ocean, whilst he slumbereth. It is not possible that on the Exchange, or the mart, or in the house of business, men should transact their affairs with their eyes fast closed in slumber. It would be a singular thing to see a nation of sleepers; for they would be a nation of idle men. They must all starve; they would produce no wealth from the soil; they would have nothing for their backs, nought for clothing and nought for food. But how many we have in the world that are inactive through sleep! Yes, I say inactive. I mean by that, that they are active enough in one direction, but they are inactive in the right. Oh how many men there are that are totally inactive in anything that is for God's glory, or for the welfare of their fellow creatures! For themselves, they can "rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness;"—for their children, which is an alias for themselves, they can toil until their fingers ache—they can weary themselves until their eyes are red in their sockets, till the brain whirls, and they can do no more. But for God they can do nothing.

Some say they have no time, others frankly confess that they have no will: for God's church they would not spend an hour, whilst for this worlds pleasure they could lay out a month. For the poor they can not spend their time and attention. They may haply have time to spare for themselves and for their own amusment; but for holy works, for deeds of charity, and for pious acts they declare they have no leisure; whereas, the fact is, they have no will.

Behold ye, how many professing Christians there are that are asleep in this sense! They are inactive. Sinners are dying in the street by hundreds; men are sinking into the flames of eternal wrath, but they fold their arms, they pity the poor perishing sinner, but they do nothing to show that their pity is real. They go to their places of worship; they occupy their well-cushioned easy pew; they wish the minister to feed them every Sabbath; but there is never a child taught in the Sunday-school by them; there is never a tract distributed at the poor man's house; there is never a deed done which might be the means of saving souls. We call them good men; some of them we even elect to the office of deacons; and no doubt good men they are; they are as good as Anthony meant to say that Brutus was honorable, when he said, "So are we all, all honorable men." So are we all, all good, if they be good. But these are good, and in some sense—good for nothing; for they just sit and eat the bread, but they do not plow the field; they drink the wine, but they will not raise the vine that doth produce it. They think that they are to live unto themselves, forgetting that "no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." Oh, what a vast amount of sleeping we have in all our churches and chapels; for truly if our churches were once awake, so far as material is concerned, there are enough converted men and women, and there is enough talent with them, and enough money with them, and enough time with them, God granting the abundance of His Holy Spirit, which he would be sure to do if they were all zealous—there is enough to preach the gospel in every corner of the earth. The church does not need to stop for want of instruments, or for want of agencies; we hare everything now except the will; we have all that we may expect to give for the conversion of the world, except just a heart for the work, and the Spirit of God poured out into our midst. Oh! brethren, "let us not sleep as do others." You will find the "others" in the church and in the world: "the refuse" of both are sound asleep.

Ere, however, I can dismiss this first point of explanation, it is necessary for me just to say that the apostle himself furnishes us with part of an exposition; for the second sentence, "let us watch and be sober," implies that the reverse of these things is the sleep, which he means. "Let us watch." There are many that never watch. They never watch against sin; they never watch against the temptations of the enemy; they do not watch against themselves, nor against "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life." They do not watch for opportunities to do good; they do not watch for opportunities to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to succor them that are in need; they do not watch for opportunities of glorifying Jesus, or for times of communion; they do not

watch for the promises; they do not watch for answers to their prayers; they do not watch for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. These are the refuse of the world: they watch not because they are asleep. But let us *watch*: so shall we prove that we are not slumberers.

Again: let us "*be sober*." Albert Barnes says, this most of all refers to abstinence, or temperance in eating and drinking, Calvin says, not so; this refers more especially to the spirit of moderation in the things of the world. Both are right; it refers to both. There be many that are not sober; they sleep because they are not so; for insobriety leadeth to sleep. They are not sober—they are drunkards, they are gluttons. They are not sober—they can not be content to do a little business—they want to do a great deal. They are not sober—they can not carry on a trade that is sure—they must speculate. They are not sober—if they lose their property, their spirit is cast down within them, and they are like men that are drunken with wormwood. If on the other hand, they get rich, they are not sober: they so set their affections things on earth that they become intoxicated with pride, because of their riches—become purse-proud, and need to have the heavens lifted up higher, lest their heads should dash against the stars. How many people there are that are not sober! Oh! I might especially urge this precept upon you at this time, my dear friends. We have hard times coming, and the times are hard enough now. Let us be sober. The fearful panic in America has mainly risen from disobedience to this command—"Be sober;" and if the professors of America had obeyed this commandment, and had been sober, the panic might at any rate have been mitigated, if not totally avoided. Now, in a little time, you who have any money laid by will be rushing to the bank to have it drawn out, because you fear that the bank is tottering. You will not be sober enough to have a little trust in your fellow-men, and help them through their difficulty, and so be a blessing to the commonwealth. And you who think there is anything to be got by lending your money at usury will not be content with lending what you have, but you will be extorting and squeezing your poor debtors, that you may get the more to lend. Men are seldom content to get rich slowly, but he that hasteth to be rich shall not be innocent. Take care, my brethren—if any hard times should come, if commercial houses should smash, and banks be broken—take care to be sober. There is nothing will get us over a panic so well as every one of us trying to keep our spirits up—just rising in the morning and saying; "Times are very hard, and to-day I may lose my all; but fretting will not help it; so just let me set a bold heart against hard sorrow, and go to my business. The wheels of trade may stop; I bless God, my treasure is in heaven; I can not be bankrupt. I have set my affections on the things of God; I can not lose those things. There is my jewel; there is my heart!" Why, if all men could do that, it would tend to create public confidence; but the cause of the great ruin of many men is the covetousness of all men, and the fear of some. If we could all go through the world with confidence, and with boldness, and with courage, there is nothing in the world that could avert the shock so well. Come, I suppose, the shock must; and there are many men now present, who are very respectable,

who may expect to be beggars ere long. Your business is, so to put your trust in Jehovah that you may be able to say, "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will I not fear;" and doing that, you will be creating more probabilities for the avoidance of your own destruction than by any other means which the wisdom of man can dictate to you. Let us not be intemperate in business, as are others; but let us awake. "Let us not sleep"—not be carried away by the somnambulism of the world, for what it is better than that?—activity and greed in sleep; "but let us watch and be sober." Oh, Holy Spirit, help us to watch and be sober.

II. Thus I have occupied a great deal of time in explaining the first point—What was the sleep which the apostle meant? And now you will notice that the word "therefore" implies that there are CERTAIN REASONS FOR THIS. I shall give you these reasons; and if I should cast them somewhat into a dramatic form, you must not wonder; they will the better perhaps, be remembered. "Therefore," says the apostle, "let us not sleep."

We shall first look at the chapter itself for our reasons. The first reason precedes the text. The apostle tells us that "we are all the children of *the light* and of the day; *therefore* let us not sleep as do others." I marvel not when, as I walk through the streets after nightfall, I see every shop closed and every window-blind drawn down; and I see the light in the upper room significant of retirement to rest. I wonder not that a half an hour later my footfall startles me, and I find none in the streets. Should I ascend the staircase, and look into the sleeper's placid countenances, I should not wonder; for it is night, the proper time for sleep. But if, some morning, at eleven or twelve o'clock, I should walk down the streets and find myself alone, and notice every shop closed, and every house straitly shut up, and hearken to no noise, should say, "'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful. What are these people at? 'Tis day-time, and yet they are all asleep. I should be inclined to seize the first rapper I could find, and give a double knock, and rush to the next door, and ring the bell, and so all the way down the street, or go to the police station, and wake up what man I found there, and bid them make a noise in the street; or go for the fire-engine, and bid the firemen rattle down the road and try to wake these people up. For I should say to myself, "There is some pestilence here; the angel of death must have flown through these streets during the night and killed all these people, or else they would have been sure to have been awake." Sleep in the daytime is utterly incongruous. "Well, now," says the apostle Paul, "ye people of God, it is day time with you; the sun of righteousness has risen upon you with healing in his wings; the light of God's Spirit is in your conscience; ye have been brought out of darkness into marvelous light; for you to be asleep, for a church to slumber, is like a city a-bed in the day, like a whole town slumbering when the sun is shining. It is untimely and unseemly."

And now, if you look to the text again, you will find there another argument. "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." So, then, it seems,

it is *war-time*; and therefore, again, it is unseemly to slumber. There is a fortress, yonder, far away in India. A troop of those abominable Sepoys have surrounded it. Blood thirsty hell-hounds, if they once gain admission, they will rend the mother and her children, and cut the strong man in pieces. They are at the gates: their cannon are loaded, their bayonets thirst for blood, and their swords are hungry to slay. Go through the fortress, and the people are all asleep. There is the warder on the tower, nodding on his bayonet. There is the captain in his tent, with his pen in his hand, and his dispatches before him, asleep at the table. There are soldiers lying down in their tents, ready for the war, but all slumbering. There is not a man to be seen keeping watch there is not a sentry there. All are asleep. Why, my friends, you would say, "Whatever is the matter here? What can it be? Has some great wizard been waving his wand, and put a spell upon them all? Or are they all mad? Have their minds fled? Sure, to be asleep in wartime is indeed outrageous. Here! take down that trumpet; go close up to the captain's ear, and blow a blast, and see if it does not awake him in a moment. Just take away that bayonet from the soldier that is asleep on the walls, and give him a sharp prick with it, and see if he does not awake." But surely, surely, nobody can have patience with people asleep, when the enemy surround the walls and are thundering at the gates.

Now, Christians, this is your case. Your life is a life of warfare; the world, the flesh, and the devil; that hellish trinity, and your poor flesh is a wretched mudwork behind which to be intrenched. Are you asleep? Asleep, when Satan has fire-balls of lust to hurl into the windows of your eyes—when he has arrows of temptation to shoot into your heart—when he has snares into which to trap your feet? Asleep, when he has undermined your very existence, and when he is about to apply the match with which to destroy you, unless sovereign grace prevents? Oh! sleep not, soldier of the cross! To sleep in war-time is utterly inconsistent. Great Spirit of God forbid that we should slumber.

But now, leaving the chapter itself, I will give you one or two other reasons that will, I trust, move Christian people to awake out of their sleep. "*Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!*" Then comes the ringing of a bell. What is this? Here is a door marked with a great white cross. Lord, have mercy upon us! All the houses down that street seem to be marked with that white death cross. What is this? Here is the grass growing in the streets; here are Cornhill and Cheapside deserted; no one is found treading the solitary pavement there is not a sound to be heard but those horse-hoofs like the hoofs of death's pale horse upon the stones, the ringing of that bell that sounds the death-knell to many, and the rumbling of the wheels of that cart, and the dreadful cry, "Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!" Do you see that house? A physician lives there. He is a man who has great skill, and God has lent him wisdom. But a little while ago, whilst in his study, God was pleased to guide his mind, and he discovered the secret of the plague. He was plague-smitten himself, and ready to die; but he lifted the blessed phial to his lips, and he drank a draught and cured himself. Do you believe what I am about to tell you? Can you

imagine it? That man has the prescription that will heal all these people; he has it in his pocket. He has the medicine which, if once distributed in those streets, would make the sick rejoice, and put that dead man's bell away. And he is asleep! he is asleep! He is asleep! O ye heavens! why do ye not fall and crush the wretch? O earth! how couldst thou bear this demon upon thy bosom? Why not swallow him up quick? He has the medicine; he is too lazy to go and tell forth the remedy. He has the cure, and is too idle to go out and administer it to the sick and the dying! No, my friends, such an inhuman wretch could not exist! But I can see him here to-day. There are you! You know the world is sick with the plague of sin, and you yourself have been cured by the remedy which has been provided. You are asleep, inactive, loitering. You do not go forth to

“Tell to others round,
What a dear Saviour you have found.”

There is the precious gospel; you do not go and put it to the lips of a sinner. There is the all-precious blood of Christ; you never go to tell the dying what they must do to be saved. The world is perishing with worse than plague: and you are idle! And you are a minister of the gospel; and you have taken that holy office upon yourself; and you are content to preach twice on a Sunday, and once on a weekday, and there is no remonstrance within you. You never desire to attract the multitudes to hear you preach; you had rather keep your empty benches, and study propriety, than you would once, at the risk of appearing over-zealous, draw the multitude and preach the word to them. You are a writer; you have great power in writing; you devote your talents alone to light literature, or to the production of other things which may furnish amusement, but which can not benefit the soul. You know the truth, but you do not tell it out. Yonder mother is a converted woman: you have children, and you forget to instruct them in the way to heaven. You, yonder, are a young man, having nothing to do on the Sabbath-day, and there is the Sunday school; you do not go to tell those children the sovereign remedy that God has provided for the cure of sick souls. The death-bell is ringing even now; hell is crying out, howling with hunger for the souls of men. “Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Let him die and be damned!” And there are you, professing to be a Christian, and doing nothing which might make you the instrument of saving souls—never putting out your hand to be the means in the hand of the Lord, of plucking sinners as brands from the burning! Oh! May the blessing of God rest on you, to turn you from such an evil way, that you may not sleep as do others, but may watch and be sober. The world's eminent danger demands that we should be active and not be slumbering.

Hark how the mast creaks! See the sails there, rent to ribbons. Breakers ahead! She will be on the rocks directly. Where is the captain? Where is the boatswain? Where are the sailors? Ahoy there! Where are you? Here's a storm come on. Where are you? You are down in the cabin. And there is the captain in a soft sweet slumber. There is the man at the wheel, as

sound asleep as ever he can be; and there are all the sailors in their hammocks. What! and the breakers ahead? What! the lives of two hundred passengers in danger, and here are these brutes asleep? Kick them out. What is the good of letting such men as these be sailors, in such a time as this especially? Why, out with you! If you had gone to sleep in fine weather we might have forgiven you. Up with you, captain! What have you been at? Are you mad? But hark! the ship has struck; she will be down in a moment. Now you will work, will you? Now you will work, when it is of no use, and when the shrieks of drowning women shall toll you into hell for your most accursed negligence, in not having taken care of them. Well, that is very much like a great many of us, in these times too.

This proud ship of our commonwealth is reeling in a storm of sin; the very mast of this great nation is creaking under the hurricane of vice that sweeps across the noble vessel; every timber is strained, and God help the good ship, or alas! none can save her. And who are her captain and her sailors, but ministers of God, the professors of religion? These are they to whom God gives grace to steer the ship. "Ye are the salt of the earth;" ye preserve and keep it alive, O children of God. Are ye asleep in the storm? Are ye slumbering now? If there were no dens of vice, if there were no harlots, if there were no houses of profanity, if there were no murders and no crimes, oh! ye that are the salt of the earth, ye might sleep; but to-day the sin of London crieth in the ears of God. This behemoth city is covered with crime, and God is vexed with her. And are we asleep, doing nothing? Then God forgive us! But sure of all the sins he ever doth forgive, this is the greatest, the sin of slumbering when a world is damning—the sin of being idle when Satan is busy, devouring the souls of men. "Brethren, let us not sleep" in such times as these; for if we do, a curse must fall upon us, horrible to bear.

There is a poor prisoner in a cell. His hair is all matted, over his eyes. A few weeks ago the judge put on the black cap, and commanded that he should be taken to the place from whence he came, and hung by the neck until dead. The poor wretch has his heart broken within him, whilst he thinks of the pinion, of the gallows, and of the drop, and of after-death. . O! who can tell how his heart is rent and racked, whilst he thinks of leaving all, and going he knoweth not where! There is a man there, sound asleep upon a bed. He has been asleep there these two days, and under his pillow he has that prisoners free pardon. I would horsewhip that scoundrel, horsewhip him soundly, for making that poor man have two days of extra misery. Why, if I had had that man's pardon, I would have been there, if I rode on the wings of lightning to get at him, and I should have thought the fastest train that ever run but slow, if I had so sweet a message to carry, and such a poor heavy heart to carry it to. But that man, that brute, is sound asleep, with a free pardon under his pillow, whilst that poor wretch's heart is breaking with dismay! Ah! do not be too hard with him: he is here today. Side by side with you this morning there is sitting a poor penitent sinner; God has pardoned him, and intends that you should tell him that good news. He sat by your side

last Sunday, and he wept all the sermon through, for he felt his guilt. If you had spoken to him then, who can tell? He might have had comfort; but there he is now—you do not tell him the good news. Do you leave that to me to do? Ah! sirs, but you can not serve God by proxy; what the minister does is nought to you; you have your own personal duty to do, and God has given you a precious promise. It is now on your heart. Will you not turn round to your next neighbor, and tell him that promise? O! there is many an aching heart that aches because of our idleness in telling the good news of this salvation. “Yes,” says one of my members, who always comes to this place on a Sunday, and looks out for young men and young women whom he has seen in tears the Sunday before, and who brings many into the church, “yes, I could tell you a story. He looks a young man in the face, and says, “Haven’t I seen you here a great many times?” ” Yes.” “I think you take a deep interest in the service, do you not?” “Yes, I do: what makes you ask me that question?” “Because I looked at your face last Sunday, and I thought there was something at work with you.” “O! sir,” he says, “nobody has spoken to me ever since I have been here till now, and I want to say a word to you. When I was at home with my mother, I used to think I had some idea of religion; but I came away, and was bound apprentice with an ungodly lot of youths, and have done everything I ought not to have done. And now, sir, I begin to weep, I begin to repent. I wish to God that I knew how I might be saved! I hear the word preached, sir, but I want something spoken personally to me by somebody.” And he turns round; he takes him by the hand and says, “My dear young brother, I am so glad I spoke to you; it makes my poor old heart rejoice to think that the Lord is doing something here still. Now, do not be cast down; for you know, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”” The young man puts his handkerchief to his eyes, and after a minute, he says, “I wish you would let me call and see you, sir.” ” O! you may,” he says. He talks with him, he leads him onward, and at last by God’s grace the happy youth comes forward and declares what God has done for his soul, and owes his salvation as much to the humble instrumentality of the man that helped him as he could do to the preaching of the minister.

Beloved brethren, the bridegroom cometh! Awake! Awake! The earth must soon be dissolved, and the heavens must melt! Awake! Awake! O Holy Spirit arouse us all, and keep us awake.

III. And now I have no time for the last point, and therefore I shall not detain you. Suffice me to say in warning, there is AN EVIL HERE LAMENTED. There are some that are asleep, and the apostle mourns it.

My fellow sinner, thou that art this day unconverted, let me say six or seven sentences to thee, and thou shalt depart. Unconverted man! unconverted woman! you are asleep today, as they that sleep on the top of the mast in time of storm; you are asleep, as he that sleeps when the water-floods are out, and when his house is undermined, and being carried down the stream far out to sea; you are asleep, as he who in the upper chamber, when his house

is burning and his own locks are singeing in the fire, knows not the devastation around him; you are asleep—asleep as he that lies upon the edge of a precipice, with death and destruction beneath him. One single start in his sleep would send him over, but he knows it not. Thou art asleep this day; and the place where thou sleepest has so frail a support that when once it breaks thou shalt fall into hell: and if thou wakest not till then, what a waking it will be! “In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment;” and he cried for a drop of water, but it was denied him. “He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ, and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” This is the gospel. Believe ye in Jesus, and ye shall “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

The Loved Ones Chastened

A Sermon

(No. 164)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 22, 1857, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”—[Revelation 3:19](#).

THE DEALINGS OF GOD towards the sons of men have always puzzled the wise men of the earth who have tried to understand them. Apart from the revelation of God the dealings of Jehovah towards his creatures in this world seem to be utterly inexplicable. Who can understand how it is that the wicked flourish and are in great power? The ungodly man flourishes like a green bay tree; behold, he stretcheth out his roots by the river: he knoweth not the year of drought; his leaf withereth not; and his fruit doth not fall in an untimely season. Lo, these are the ungodly that flourish in the world; they are filled with riches; they heap up gold like dust; they leave the rest of their substance to their babes; they add field to field, and acre to acre, and they become the princes of the earth. On the other hand, see how the righteous are cast down. How often is virtue dressed in the rags of poverty! How frequently is the most pious spirit made to suffer from hunger, and thirst, and nakedness! We have sometimes heard the Christian say, when he has contemplated these things, “Surely, I have served God in vain; it is for nothing that I have chastened myself every morning and vexed my soul with fasting; for lo, God hath cast me down, and he lifteth up the sinner. How can this be?” The sages of the heathen could not answer this question, and they therefore adopted the expedient of cutting the gordian knot. “We can not tell how it is,” they might have said; therefore they flew at the fact itself, and denied it. “The man that prospers is favored of the gods; the man who is unsuccessful is obnoxious to the Most High.” So said the heathen, and they knew no better. Those more enlightened easterns, who talked with Job in the days of his affliction, got but little further; for they believed that all who served God would have a hedge about them; God would multiply their wealth and increase their happiness; while they saw in Job’s affliction, as they conceived, a certain sign that he was a hypocrite, and therefore God had quenched his candle and put out his light in darkness. And alas! even Christians have fallen into the same error. They have been apt to think, that if God lifts a man up there must be some excellence in him; and if he chastens and afflicts, they are generally led to think that it must be an exhibition of wrath. Now hear ye the text, and the riddle is all unriddled; listen ye to the words of Jesus, speaking to his servant John, and the mystery is all unmysteried. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

The fact is, that this world is not the place of punishment. There may now and then be eminent judgments; but as a rule God does not in the present state fully punish any man for sin. He allows the wicked to go on in their wickedness; he throws the reins upon their necks; he lets them go on unbridled in their lusts; some checks of conscience there may be; but these are rather, as monitions than as punishments. And, on the other hand, he casts the Christian down; he gives the most afflictions to the most pious; perhaps he makes more waves of trouble roll over the breast of the most sanctified Christian than over the heart of any other man living. So, then, we must remember that as this world is not the place of punishment, we are to expect punishment and reward in the world to come; and we must believe that the only reason, then, why God afflicts his people must be this:—

“In love I correct thee, thy gold to refine,
To make thee at length in my likeness to shine.”

I shall try this morning to notice, first, *what it is in his children that God corrects*; secondly, *why God corrects them*; and thirdly, *what is our comfort, when we are laboring under the rebukes and correctings of our God*. Our comfort must be the fact that he loves us even then. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

I. First, then, beloved, WHAT IS IT IN THE CHRISTIAN THAT GOD REBUKES? One of the Articles of the Church of England saith right truly, that, naturally, “man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, *phronema sarkos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin,” and because evil remains in the regenerate there is therefore a necessity that that evil should be upbraided. Ay, and a necessity that when that upbraiding is not sufficient, God should go to severer measures, and after having failed in his rebukes, adopt the expedient of chastening. “I rebuke and chasten.” Hence God has provided means for the chastisement and the rebuking of his people. Sometimes God rebukes his children under the ministry. The minister of the gospel is not always to be a minister of consolation. The same Spirit that is the Comforter is he who convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and the same minister who is to be as the angel of God unto our souls, uttering sweet words that are full of honey, is to be at times the rod of God, the staff in the hand of the Almighty, with which to smite us on account of our transgressions. And ah! beloved, how often under the ministry ought we to have been checked when we were not? Perhaps the minister’s words were very forcible, and they were uttered with true earnestness, and they applied to our case; but alas! we shut our ear to them, and applied

them to our brother instead of to ourselves. I have often marveled when I have been preaching. I have thought that I have described the cases of some of my most prominent members. I have marked in them diverse sins, and as Christ's faithful pastor, I have not shunned to picture their case in the pulpit, that they might receive a well-deserved rebuke; but I have marveled when I have spoken to them afterward, that they have thanked me for what I have said, because they thought it so applicable to such another brother in the church, whilst I had intended it wholly for them, and had, as I thought, so made the description accurate, and so brought it out in all its little points, that it must have been received by them. But alas! you know, my friends, that we sit under the sound of the Word, and we seldom think how much it belongs to us, especially if we hold an office in the Church. It is hard for a minister when he is hearing a brother minister preach, to think, it may be, he has a word of rebuke to me. If exalted to the office of elder or deacon, there groweth sometimes with that office a callousness to the Word when spoken to himself; and the man in office is apt to think of the hundreds of inquirers unto whom that may be found applicable, and of the multitudes of the babes in grace to whom such a word comes in season. Ay, friends, if we did but listen more to the rebukes of God in the ministry, if we hearkened more to his Word as he speaks to us every Sabbath day, we might be spared many corrections, for we are not corrected until we have despised rebukes, and after we have rejected those, then out comes the rod.

Sometimes, again, God rebukes his children *in their consciences*, without any visible means whatever. Ye that are the people of God will acknowledge that there are certain times, when, apparently without any instrumentality, your sins are brought to remembrance; your soul is cast down within you, and your spirit is sore vexed. God the Holy Spirit is himself making inquisition for sin; he is searching Jerusalem with candles; he is so punishing you because you are settled on your lees. If you look around you there is nothing that could cause your spirits to sink. The family are not sick; your business prospers; your body is in good health; why then this sinking of spirit? You are not conscious at the time, perhaps, that you have committed any gross act of sin; still this dark depression continues, and at last you discover that you had been living in a sin which you did not know—some sin of ignorance, hidden and unperceived, and therefore God did withdraw from you the joy of his salvation, till you had searched your heart, and discovered wherein the evil lay. We have much reason to bless God that he does adopt this way sometimes of rebuking us before he chastens.

At other seasons, the rebuke is *quite indirect*. How often have I met rebuke, where it never was intended to be given! But God overruled the circumstance for good. Have you never been rebuked by a child? The innocent little prattler uttered something quite unwittingly, which cut you to your heart, and manifested your sin. You walked the street, may hap, and you heard some man swear; and the thought perhaps struck your mind, "How

little am I doing for the reclaiming of those who are abandoned!” And so, the very sight of sin accused you of negligence, and the very hearing of evil was made use of by God to convince you of another evil. Oh! if we kept our eyes open, there is not an ox in the meadow, nor a sparrow in the tree, which might not sometimes suggest a rebuke. There is not a star in midnight, there is not a ray in the noon-day, but what might suggest to us some evil that is hidden in our hearts, and lead us to investigate our inner man, if we were but awake to the soft whispers, of Jehovah’s rebukes. You know, our Saviour made use of little things to rebuke his disciples. He said, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. Behold the fowls of the air, how they are fed!” So he made lilies and ravens speak to his disciples, to upbraid their discontent. Earth is full of monitors: all that we need, are ears to hear. However, when these rebukes all fail, God proceeds from rebuke to correction. He will not always chide; but, if his rebukes are unheeded, then he grasps the rod, and he uses it. I need not tell you how it is that God uses the rod. My brethren, you have all been made to tingle with it. He has sometimes smitten you in your persons, sometimes in your families, frequently in your estates, oftentimes in your prospects. He has smitten you in your nearest and dearest friend; or, worse still, it may be he has given you “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet you.” But you all understand, if you know anything of the life of a Christian, what the rod, and the staff, and the covenant are; and what it is to be corrected by God. Let me just particularize for a few minutes, and show what it is that God corrects in us.

Very frequently, God corrects *inordinate affection*. It is right of us to love our relatives—it is wrong of us to love them more than God. You, perhaps, are yourselves to-day guilty of this sin. At any rate, beloved, we may most of us look at home when we come to dwell on this point. Have we not some favored one—perhaps, the partner of our heart, or the offspring of our bosom, more dear to us than life itself? Have I not heard some man whose life is bound up in the life of the lad, his child?—some mother, whose soul is knit into the soul of her babe—some wife, some husband, to whom the loss of the partner would be the loss of life? Oh, there are many of us who are guilty of inordinate affection toward relations. Mark you, God will rebuke us for that. He will rebuke us in this way. Sometimes he will rebuke us by the minister; if that is not enough, he will rebuke us by sending sickness or disease to those very persons upon whom we have set our hearts; and if that rebuke us not, and if we are not zealous to repent, he will chasten us: the sickness shall yet be unto death. The disease shall break forth with more fearful violence, and the thing which we have made our idol shall be smitten, and shall become the food of worms. There never was an idol, that God either did not, or will not pull out of its place. “I am the Lord thy God; I am a jealous God;” and if we put any, however good and excellent their characters may be, and however deserving of our affection, upon God’s throne, God will cry, “Down with it,” and we shall have to weep many tears; but if we had not done so, we might have preserved the treasure, and have enjoyed it far better, without having lost it.

But other men are baser than this. One can easily overlook the fault of making too much of children, and wife, and friends, although very grievous in the sight of God; but alas! there are some that are too sordid to love flesh and blood; they love dirt, mere dirty earth, yellow gold. It is that on which they set their hearts. Their purse, they tell us, is dross; but when we come to take aught from it, we find they do not think it is so. "Oh," said a man once, "if you want a subscription from me, Sir, you must get at my heart, and then you will get at my purse." "Yes," said I, "I have no doubt I shall, for I believe that is where your purse lies, and I shall not be very far off from it." And how many there are who call themselves Christians, who make a god out of their wealth! Their park, their mansion, their estate, their warehouses, their large ledgers, their many clerks, their expanding business, or if not these, their opportunity to retire, their money in the Three per Cents. All these things are their idols and their gods; and we take them into our churches, and the world finds no fault with them. They are prudent men. You know many of them; they are very respectable people, they hold many respectable positions, and they are so prudent, only that the love of money, which is the root of all evil, is in their hearts too plainly to be denied. Every one may see it, though, perhaps, they see it not themselves. "Covetousness, which is idolatry," reigns very much in the church of the living God. Well, mark you, God will chasten for that. Whosoever loveth mammon among God's people, shall first be rebuked for it, as he is rebuked by me this day, and if that rebuke be not taken, there shall be a chastisement given. It may be, that the gold shall melt like the snow-flake before the sun; or if it be preserved, it shall be said, "Your gold and silver are cankered; the moth shall eat up your garments, and destroy your glory." Or else, the Lord will bring leanness into their souls, and cause them to go down to their graves with few honors on their heads, and with little comfort in their hearts; because they loved their gold more than their God, and valued earthly riches more than the riches that are eternal. The Lord save us from that, or else he will surely correct us.

But this is not the only sin: we are all subject to another crime which God abhors exceedingly. It is the sin of *pride*. If the Lord gives us a little comfort, we grow so big that we hardly know what to do with ourselves. Like Jeshurun of old, of whom it is said, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." Let us for a little time enjoy the full assurance of faith; self-conceit whispers, "You will retain the savor of that all your days;" and there is not quite a whisper, but something even fainter than that—"You have no need to depend upon the influence of the Holy Spirit now. See what a great man you have grown. You have become one of the Lord's most valued people; you are a Samson; you may pull down the very gates of hell and fear not. You have no need to cry, 'Lord, have mercy upon me.'" Or at other times, it takes a different turn. He gives us temporal mercies, and then we presumptuously say, "My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved." We meet with the poor saints, and we begin to hector over them, as if we were something, and they were nothing. We find some in trouble; we have no sympathy with them; we are bluff and blunt with them, as we talk with them about

their troubles; yea, we are even savage and cruel with them. We meet with some who are in deep distress and faint-hearted; we begin to forget when we were faint-hearted too, and because they cannot run as fast as we can, we run far ahead, and turn back and look at them, call them sluggards, and say they are idle and lazy. And perhaps even in the pulpit, if we are preachers, we have got hard words to say against those who are not quite so advanced as we are. Well, mark, there never was a saint yet, that grew proud of his fine feathers, but what the Lord plucked them out by-and-by. There never yet was an angel that had pride in his heart, but he lost his wings, and fell into Gehenna, as Satan and those fallen angels did; and there shall never be a saint who indulges self-conceit, and pride, and self-confidence, but the Lord will spoil his glories, and trample his honors in the mire, and make him cry out yet again, "Lord, have mercy upon me," less than the least of all saints, and the "very chief of sinners."

Another sin that God rebukes, is *sloth*. Now I need not stop to picture that. How many of you are the finest specimens of sloth that can be discovered! I mean not in a business sense, for you are "not slothful in business;" but with regard to the things of God, and the cause of truth, why, nine out of ten of all the professors of religion, I do hazard the assertion, are as full of sloth as they can be. Take our churches all around, and there is not a corporation in the world, however corrupt, that is less attentive to its professed interest, than the church of Christ. There certainly are many societies and establishments in the world that deserve much blame for not attending to those interests which they ought to promote; but I do think the Church of God is the hugest culprit of all. She says that she is the preacher of the gospel to the poor: does she preach it to them? Yes, here and there: now and then there is a spasmodic effort: but how many are there that have got tongues to speak, and ability to utter God's Word that are content to be still! She professes to be the educator of the ignorant, and she is so in a measure: there are many of you who have no business to be here this morning—you ought to have been teaching in the Sabbath-school, or instructing the young, and teaching others. Ye have no need of teachers just now; ye have learned the truth. and should have been teaching it to other people. The church professes that she is yet to cast the light of the gospel throughout the world. She does a little in missionary enterprise; but ah! how little! how little! how little compared with what her Master did for her and the claims of Jesus upon her! We are a lazy set. Take the church all round, we are as idle as we can be; and we need to have some whipping times of persecution, to whip a little more earnestness and zeal into us. We thank God this is not so much the case now, as it was even twelve months ago. We hope the church may progress in her zeal; for if not, she, as a whole, and each of us as members, will be first rebuked, and if we take not the rebuke, we shall afterwards be chastened for this our great sin.

I have no time to enter into all the other reasons for which God will rebuke and chasten. Suffice it to say that every sin has one twig in God's rod appropriated to itself. Suffice it to

say, that in God's hand there are punishments for each particular transgression; and it is very singular to notice how in Bible history almost every saint has been chastened for the sin he has committed by the sin itself falling upon his own head. Transgression has been first a pleasure, and afterward it has been a scourge. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," and that is the severest punishment in all the world.

Thus I have tried to open the first head—*it is that God rebukes and chastens.*

II. Now, secondly, WHY DOES GOD REBUKE AND CHASTEN? "Why," says one, "God rebukes his children because they are his children; and he chastens them because they are his children." Well; I will not go the length of saying that is false, but I will go the length of saying it is not true. If any one should say to a father, after he had chastened his child, "Why is it you have chastened the child?" he would not say, it is because I am his father. It is true in one sense; but he would say, "I have chastened the child because he has done wrong." Because the proximate reason why he had chastened his child would not be that he was his father, though that would have something to do with it as a primary reason; but the absolute and primary cause would be, "I have chastened him because he has done wrong, because I wish to correct him for it, that he might not do so again." Now, God, when he chastens his children, never does it absolutely; because he is his father; but he does it for a wise reason. He has some other reason besides his fatherhood. At the same time, one reason why God afflicts his children and not others, is because he is their Father. If you were to go home to-day and see a dozen boys in the streets throwing stones and breaking windows it is very likely you would start the whole lot of them; but if there is one boy that would get a sweet knock on the head it would be your own; for you would say, "What are you at, John? What business have you here?" You might not be justified, perhaps, in meddling with the others—you would let their own fathers attend to them; but because you were his father, you would try to make him remember it. Certain special chastisements are inflicted on God's children, because they are his children; but it is not because they are his children that he chastens them at any one time, but because they have been doing something wrong. Now, if you are under chastisement, let this truth be certain to you. Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee? Art thou chastened in thy business? Then what sin hast thou committed? Art thou cast down in thy spirit? Then what transgression has brought this on thee? Remember, it is not fair to say, "I am chastened because I am his child;" the right way to say it is, "I am his child, and therefore when he chastens me he has a reason for it." Now, what is it? I will help you to judge.

Sometimes God chastens and afflicts us, *to prevent sin.* He sees that the embryo of lust is in our hearts; he sees that that little egg of mischief is beginning to hatch and to produce sin, and he comes and crushes it at once—nips the sin in the bud. Ah! we can not tell how much guilt Christians have been saved from by their afflictions. We are running on madly to our destruction, and then some dark apparition of trouble comes, and stretches itself

across the way, and in great fright we fly back astonished. We ask, why this trouble? Oh! if we knew the danger into which we were rushing we should only say, “Lord, I thank thee that by that direful trouble thou didst save me from a sin, that would have been far more troublous and infinitely more dangerous.”

At other times God chastens us for sins already committed. We perhaps have forgotten them; but God has not. I think that sometimes years elapse between a sin and the chastisement for it. The sins of our youth may be punished in our gray old age; the transgression you did twenty years ago, those of you who have grown old, may this very day be found in your bones. God chastens his children, but he sometimes lays the rod by. The time would not be seasonable perhaps; they are not strong enough to bear it: so he lays the rod by and he says, as surely as he is my child, though I lay the rod by, I will make him smart for it, that I may at last deliver him from his sin, and make him like unto myself. But mark, ye people of God, in all these chastisements for sin there is no punishment. When God chastises you he does not punish as a judge does, but he chastens as a father. When he lays the rod on, with many blows and smart ones, there is not one thought of anger in his heart—there is not one look of displeasure in his eye; he means it all for your good; his heaviest blows are as much tokens of his affection as his sweetest caresses. He has no motive but your profit and his own glory. Be of good cheer, then, if these be the reasons. But take care that thou dost fulfil the command—“Be zealous, therefore, and repent.”

I read in an old Puritan author the other day a very pretty figure. He says, “A full wind is not so favorable to a ship when it is fully fair as a side wind. It is strange,” says he, “that when the wind blows in an exact direction to blow a ship into port, she will not go near so well as if she had a cross wind sideways upon her.” And he explains it thus: “The mariners say that when the wind blows exactly fair it only fills a part of the sails, and it can not reach the sails that are ahead, because the sail, bellying out with the wind, prevents the wind from reaching that which is further ahead. But when the wind sweeps sideways, then every sail is full, and she is driven on swiftly in her course with the full force of the wind. Ah!” says the old Puritan, “there is nothing like a side wind to drive God’s people to heaven. A fair wind only fills a part of their sails; that is, fills their joy, fills their delight; but,” says he, “the side wind fills them all; it fills their caution, fills their prayerfulness, fills every part of the spiritual man, and so the ship speeds onward toward its haven.” It is with this design that God sends affliction, to chasten us on account of our transgressions.

III. And now I am to conclude by noting WHAT IS OUR COMFORT WHEN GOD REBUKES AND CHASTENS US?

Our great comfort is, that he *loves* us still. Oh! what a precious thing faith is, when we are enabled to believe our God, and how easy then it is to endure and to surmount all trouble. Hear the old man in the garret, with a crust of bread and a cup of cold water. Sickness has confined him these years within that narrow room. He is too poor to maintain an attendant.

Some woman comes in to look to him in the morning and in the evening, and there he sits, in the depths of poverty. And you will suppose he sits and groans. No, brethren; he may sometimes groan when the body is weak, but usually he sits and sings; and when the visitor climbs the creaking staircase of that old house, where human beings scarcely ought to be allowed to live; and when he goes into that poor cramped up room that is more fit to accommodate swine than men, he sits down upon that bottomless chair, and when he has seated himself as well as he can upon the four cross pieces of it he begins to talk to him, and he finds him full of heaven. "Oh! sir," he says, "my God is very kind to me." Propped up he is with pillows, and full of pain in every member of his body, but he says, "Blessed be his name, he has not left me. Oh! sir, I have enjoyed more peace and happiness in this room, out of which I have not gone for years,"—(the case is real that I am now describing) "I have enjoyed more happiness here than I ever did in all my life. My pains are great, sir, but they will not be for long; I am going home soon." Ay, were he more troubled still, had he such rich consolation poured into his heart, he might endure all with a smile and sing in the furnace. Now, child of God, thou art to do the same. Remember, all thou hast to suffer is sent in love. It is hard work for a child, when his father has been chastening it, to look at the rod as a picture of love. You can not make your children do that: but when they grow up to be men and women how thankful they are to you then! "O father," says the son, "I know now why it was I was so often chastened; I had a proud hot spirit; it would have been the ruin of me if thou hadst not whipped it out of me. Now, I thank thee, my father, for it."

So, while we are here below we are nothing but little children; we can not prize the rod: when we come of age, and we go into our estates in Paradise, we shall look back upon the rod of the Covenant as being better than Aaron's rod, for it blossoms with mercy. We shall say to it, "Thou art the most wondrous thing in all the list of my treasures. Lord, I thank thee that thou didst not leave me unafflicted, or else I had not been where I am, and what I am, a child of God in Paradise." "I have this week," says one, "sustained so serious a loss in my business, that I am afraid I shall be utterly broken up." There is love in that. "I came here this morning," says one, "and I left a dead child in the house—dear to my heart." There is love in that. That coffin and that shroud will both be full of love; and when your child is taken away, it shall not be in anger. "Ah!" cries another, "but I have been exceedingly sick, and even now I feel I ought not to have ventured out; I must return to my bed." Ah! he makes your bed in your affliction. There is love in every pain, in every twitch of the nerve; in every pang that shoots through the members, there is love. "Ah!" says one, "it is not myself, but I have got a dear one that is sick." There is love there, too. Do what God may, he can not do an unloving act toward his people. O Lord! thou art Omnipotent; thou canst do all things; but thou canst not lie, and thou canst not be unkind to thine elect. No, Omnipotence may build a thousand worlds, and fill them with bounties; Omnipotence may powder mountains into dust, and burn the sea, and consume the sky, but Omnipotence can not do

an unloving thing toward a believer. Oh! rest quite sure, Christian, a hard thing, an unloving thing from God toward one of his own people is quite impossible. He is kind to you when he casts you into prison as when he takes you into a palace; He is as good when he sends famine into your house as when he fills your barns with plenty. The only question is, Art thou his child? If so, he hath rebuked thee in affection, and there is love in his chastisement.

I have now done, but not until I have made my last appeal. I have now to turn from God's people to the rest of you. Ah! my hearers, there are some of you that have no God; you have no Christ on whom to cast your troubles. I see some of you to-day dressed in the habiliments of mourning; I suppose you have lost some one dear unto you. Oh! ye that are robed in black, is God your God? Or are you mourning now, without God to wipe every tear from your eye? I know that many of you are struggling now in your business with very sharp and hard times. Can you tell your troubles to Jesus, or have you to bear them all yourself—friendless and helpless? Many men have been driven mad, because they had no one to whom to communicate their sorrow; and how many others had been driven worse than mad, because when they told their sorrows their confidence was betrayed. O poor mourning spirit, if thou hadst, as thou mightest have done, gone and told him all thy woes, he would not have laughed at thee, and he would never have told it out again. Oh I remember when once my young heart ached in boyhood, when I first loved the Saviour. I was far away from father and mother, and all I loved, and I thought my soul would burst; for I was an usher in a school, in a place where I could meet with no sympathy or help. Well, I went to my chamber, and told my little griefs into the ears of Jesus. They were great griefs to me then, though they are nothing now. When I just whispered them on my knees into the ear of him who had loved me with an everlasting love, oh! it was so sweet, none can tell. If I had told them to somebody else, they would have told them again; but he, my blessed confidant, he knows my secrets, and he never tells them. Oh! what can you do that have got no Jesus to tell your troubles to? And the worst of it is, you have got more troubles to come. Times may be hard now, but they will be harder one day—they will be harder when they come to an end. They say it is hard to live, but it is very hard to die. When one comes to die and has Jesus with him, even then dying is hard work; but to die without a Saviour! Oh! my friends, are you inclined to risk it? Will you face the grim monarch, and no Saviour with you? Remember, you must do it; you must die soon. The chamber shall soon be hushed in silence no sound shall be heard except the babbling watch that ever tells the flight of time. The physician shall "Hush!" and hold up his finger, and whisper in a suppressed voice, "He can not last many minutes longer." And the wife and the children, or the father and the mother, will stand around your bed and look at you, as I have looked at some, with a sad, sad heart. They will look at you a little while, till at last the death-change will pass o'er your face. "He is gone!" it shall be said; and the hand uplifted shall be dropped down again, and the eye shall be glazed in darkness, and then the mother will turn away and say, "O my child, I could

have borne all this if there had been hope in thine end!” And when the minister comes in to comfort the family, he will ask the question of the father, “Do you think your son had an interest in the blood of Christ?” The reply will be, “O sir, we must not judge, but I never saw anything like it; I never had any reason to hope: that is my greatest sorrow.” There, there! I could bury every friend without a tear, compared with the burial of an ungodly friend. Oh! it seems such an awful thing, to have one allied to you by ties of blood, dead and in hell.

We generally speak very softly about the dead. We say, “Well, we hope.” Sometimes we tell great lies, for we know we do not hope at all. We wish it may be so, but we can not hope it; we never saw any grounds that should lead us to hope. But would it not be an awful thing if we were honest enough to look the dread reality in its face—if the husband were simply to look at it, and say, “There was my wife; she was an ungodly, careless woman. I know at least, she never said anything concerning repentance and faith; and if she died so, and I have every reason to fear she did, then she is cast away from God.” It would be unkind to say it; but it is only honest for us to know it—to look dread truth in the face. Oh! my fellow-men and brethren! Oh! ye that are partners with me of an immortal life! We shall one day meet again before the throne of God; but ere that time comes, we shall each of us be separated, and go our divers ways down the shelving banks of the river of death. My fellow-man, art thou prepared to die alone? I ask thee this question again—Art thou prepared to arise in the day of judgment without a Saviour? Art thou willing to run all risks and face thy Maker, when he comes to judge thee, without an advocate to plead thy cause? Art thou prepared to hear him say, “Depart ye cursed!” Are ye ready now to endure the everlasting ire of him who smites, and smiting once, doth smite forever? Oh! if ye will make your bed in hell, if you are prepared to be damned, if you are willing to be so, then live in sin and indulge in pleasures;—you will get your wish. But if ye would not; if ye would enter heaven, and ye would be saved, “Turn thee, turn thee, why will ye die, O house of Israel?” May God the Holy Spirit, enable you to repent of sin and to believe on Jesus; and then you shall have a portion among them that are sanctified: but unrepenting and unbelieving, if ye die so, ye must be driven from his presence, never to have life, and joy, and liberty, as long as eternity shall last.

The Lord prevent this, for Jesus, sake.

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