CHARLES SPURGEON SERMONS (63 VOLUMES) PART2 - VOLUME 1

by C.H. Spurgeon

The first volume of the second part of Spurgeon's comprehensive sermon collection, continuing the vast treasury of biblical exposition delivered by the Prince of Preachers to his London congregation over decades of faithful ministry.

100 Chapters

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Chapter 1

Luke 19,9 #2665 - A Day to Be Remembered

A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED

NO. 2665

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 11, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1, 1882.

"And Jesus said unto him, This day has salvation come to this house."

Luke 19:9.

OBSERVE, dear Friends, that our Lord spoke this sentence to Zacchaeus. Some of us may have fancied that He said it to the objecting people, but He did not. They may have heard it and their objection may have been answered by it, but the main purpose of our blessed Lord, in uttering those words, was not to answer objectors, but to comfort one who might feel dispirited by their murmuring remark. Therefore, "Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house."

It is always better to comfort Believers than to answer quibblers. The quibblers scarcely deserve a reply, for they are pretty sure to find fault again—it is according to their nature to do so. But as for the poor distressed people of God, who gladly receive the Truth of God, and yet have to endure unkind observations, let these be cheered, for has not the Lord, Himself, said, "Comfort you, comfort you My people"? Now, what could give Zacchaeus greater consolation than for the Lord Jesus Christ to bear witness to the fact of his salvation? "Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house."

I fancy that I can hear some of you say, "We should count it the happiest day in our lives if the Lord Jesus would come and tell us that salvation had come to us." But, Beloved, you cannot have Him come, in the flesh, to say that to you, for He has gone away, to carry on His service elsewhere. Among other things, He has gone to prepare a place for you who believe in Him. But His Spirit is equally Divine and He is always with us—and you may have the Spirit of God bearing witness with your spirit that you are the children of God. No, I trust that you not only believe that you may have this Witness, but that you actually have had it— you have had that secret, silent, inward evidence which no man understands but the one who receives it—and you know, in your own soul, that you have passed from death unto life because the Holy Sprit has sealed that Truth of God upon your heart! Therefore, dear Friend, be joyful. Yes, be exceedingly glad! If anything can make a man leap for joy, it ought to be the assurance of his eternal safety. If salvation has come to your heart, you ought to be as happy as an angel! I think that there are

Volume 46 1some reasons why you should be even happier, for an angel cannot know, by personal experience, the bliss of having his sins forgiven. You who have realized this wondrous blessing ought to cause the wilderness and the solitary places to resound with the melody of your thanksgiving! And with the music of your grateful delight you should make even the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Oh, what bliss it is to be assured by the Holy Spirit, Himself, that you have passed from death unto life, and that salvation has indeed come to you! May many of you enjoy that bliss from this very hour!

Now let us come directly to the text. "This day," says Christ, "is salvation come to this house." You will not forget the outline of the sermon, for it is very simple, and one that can be easily remembered. First, This day—what? Secondly, This day—why? Thirdly, This day—why not?

I. First, THIS DAY—WHAT? What about this day? Christ says, "This day is salvation come to this house." He seemed to

cut that day out of all the rest of time and to say concerning it, "This day—this particular day—on this very day—is salvation come to you." Then, let this day be a holy day and let it be a holiday! Let it be remembered for many a year, yes, let it be remembered throughout all time and throughout eternity, too. "This day."

You know that there are some people who observe certain days which God has not ordained to be kept in any special manner. The Galatians did so and, therefore, Paul wrote to them, "I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." We do not judge those who act in a similar way, today, but still, like Paul, we are afraid for them—that is to say, we fear they are mistaken in what they do. But there are some days which God commanded to be observed.

The first was the day when the work of creation was finished, concerning which we read, "On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." The completion of the creation, when, "God saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good," deserves to be remembered! And does not the new creation also deserve to be remembered? When the Lord creates in a man a new heart and a right spirit, shall we not say, one to another, "This day—this joyful day—this Divine day—this new creation day—is a day to be observed very specially"?

It is clear, from the practice of the Apostles, that the Lord intends us to observe the first day of the week, because that was the day of Christ's Resurrection from the dead, the day of the completion of our redemption—and well may we commemorate the complete redemption even more than the complete creation! Shall not each saved man especially celebrate the day when he was redeemed from sin? Shall he not count it worthy to be observed, with holy rites of preaching, praise and prayer, and to be had in grateful remembrance as long as he lives? Each Believer can say of the Lord's Day, "This day the Lord redeemed my soul out of the land of the enemy and set me free forever." God has appointed but one day to be kept sacred above all others—that is the Lord's Day. Your Christmas days, and your Good Fridays and all such seasons are only observed by man's ordinance—but the Sabbath is ordained of God—and that is to be observed as the emblem of rest. Now, surely, when a man comes into rest and "we which have believed do enter into rest," then that day should be especially observed by him. It should become a Sabbath unto the Lord

throughout the man's whole life—that happy day in which salvation came to him. Let, then, "this day" stand as a special day in your calendar! Mark it with a red line, if you like. Or mark it with a golden seal and let it be had in remembrance forevermore.

Our Lord said to Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house." From these Words I learn, first, that salvation is a speedy blessing. It can come to a house in a day. No, more, it can take possession of a man's heart in a day. No, to go further, this great work can be accomplished in a single moment! I suppose that the new birth is actually a thing which requires no appreciable period of time—a flash and it is done! If a man is dead and he is restored to life, there may be, in certain respects, a gradual operation upon that man and some time may elapse before he is able to walk. But there must be a certain instant in which there is life in the man, whereas, a moment before, there was no life in him. The actual quickening must be a thing that is instantaneous, so that the working of salvation in a man may not only be performed this day, or this hour, or this quarter of an hour, but this minute, or even this second! Between light and darkness there is usually a period of twilight and so there is in the soul, but, even in twilight there is a measure of light, and there must be a moment when the first real beam of light begins to smite the ebonite darkness.

So there must be a moment when Grace first enters the soul and the man who before was graceless, becomes gracious! I think this is a good point to be remembered. You poor deluded souls who hope to save yourselves by your own works will have to keep on throughout your whole lives at that useless occupation! And even when you lie dying, you may be sure that you are not saved if you have been trusting to your own works. But he that believes in Christ Jesus is saved then and there and he can joyfully sing—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done! I am my Lord's, and He is mine."

This is a blessed fact, that salvation can come to a soul this very hour. No, as I have already reminded you, long before the hand of that clock shall have reached the end of this hour, salvation may have entered into many hearts that are in this place, as truly as it entered into the house of Zacchaeus!

Next, I learn from our text that salvation is a discernible blessing. "This day is salvation come to this house." Christ could see it, so that it was something which could be seen. Yes, and salvation was also seen by Zacchaeus, himself, and the fruits of it were soon seen by those who were in the house with him. Do not suppose that a man can be saved and yet know nothing about the great change that has been worked in him. It is not every man who can say for certain that he is saved, for faith is a thing of growth and assurance may not come at once. But when a man is really and completely saved, he has but to use the proper means and he may become absolutely certain of it. God the Holy Spirit is willing and waiting to give the full assurance of faith and of understanding to those who seek it at His hands.

Next, salvation is a perfect blessing. "This day is salvation come to this house." Well, but only as late as yesterday that man had not even seen Jesus! Half an hour ago, he was climbing a tree, like a boy might have done, with no wish but just to get a sight of Jesus! And, now, is that man saved? "Yes," says Christ, "this day is salvation come to this house." "But, surely, you don't talk as positively as that concerning a man who came here tonight unsaved and who has just trusted in

Jesus? You must mean that he has reached a hopeful stage in his experience and that, after several years, he may, perhaps, come to be really assured that he is a saved man." I mean nothing of the sort! I mean just what the text implies, which is that the moment the Lord Jesus Christ crossed the threshold of the house of Zacchaeus, his sins were forgiven him, his heart was renewed, his spirit was changed and he was a saved man. "But," someone asks, "is anybody ever saved before he dies?" Yes, certainly! Were those persons dead of whom Paul wrote, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God." They were living men and women, yet the Apostle said that they were saved—and so they were! And, at the present moment, there are hundreds of thousands of believers in Jesus upon the face of this earth who are as truly saved, now, as they will be when they stand before the burning Throne of God "without spot, or wrinkle or any such thing." In God's judgment, by virtue of the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom they are resting by faith, they have been delivered from condemnation, they have escaped from the dominion of sin and, in a word, they are saved! So, you see dear Friends, that salvation is a perfect blessing.

Notice, next, that it is a much-containing blessing. A man who believes in Christ is saved directly, but he does not fully know how much that word, "saved," means yet. It is like a big box that comes into the house and you begin to open it and to take out, first, one thing and then another. "There," you say, "that is all." "Oh, no!" somebody says, who looks more carefully, "here is another packet." "Well, then, that is surely all. There is nothing but straw at the bottom of the box." You put your hand in and you cry, "Why, there is something more, and something more— what a boxful it is!" And what a boxful salvation is! You have no idea what there is in it—not only the pardon of sin, but justifying righteousness. Not only that, but regeneration, a new heart and a right spirit! Not only that, but sanctification, adoption, acceptance, power in prayer, preservation, perseverance, victory—yes, we are to be more than conquerors through Him that has loved us—and all that is in the box!

Yes, and more, too, for we are to have a safe and happy departure out of this world and an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of God our Father! All that is in the box and all that had come into the house of Zacchaeus when the Lord Jesus Christ came there. And you, also, have all that if you have Christ, for it is all in Christ. You know how He said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father," and Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." You will never get to the bottom of that box which bears the name, "salvation." However great your needs may be, you may keep on taking out of it all that you require and still there shall be more left! Or, to change the figure, salvation is a springing well from which the more you draw, the more there is remaining, for drawn wells are always the sweetest and usually the fullest. So, bring your buckets to this great well of Gospel Grace that is springing up at your very feet! Thus you see that salvation is an all-containing blessing.

And, next, it is a spreading blessing, for salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus—not to him only, but I hope it means to his wife, his children, and his servants. I never like to have the servants left out, though I am afraid that they often are. You servants who live in Christian families, mind that you do not get left out, for remember that Noah, although he was a good man, did not get a servant into the ark with him and his family. Also remember Lot. He was a good man of a

very poor sort and he only got his two children out of Sodom, and no servant went with them. It is a sad thing when you live and labor in the midst of Christian people and yet you remain unsaved. I hope and believe that in the case of Zacchaeus, all in his house were saved when salvation came there.

But, once more, the salvation which had come to the house of Zacchaeus, was an abiding blessing, for I never read that it went away. If salvation comes to a man's house, it comes to stay there, as Christ said to Zacchaeus, "I must abide at your house." I can never believe in a man being saved for a time and then falling from Grace—and having to begin all over again. If he does not hold on his way to the end, it is clear that he was never really saved at all. As I have often told you, I can understand a man being regenerated, that is, being born again—but then some people tell us that it is possible for him, afterwards, to fall away from Grace. But what is to become of him the next time? Why, I suppose that he must be re-regenerated, born again and again! But I never read in Scripture anything of the kind. A man may be born again once, but he cannot be born again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again! That cannot be! When the work of regeneration is once done, it is done forever! The work of man comes to an end, but the work of God fails not. That which is born of God is as immortal as God Himself! The new life that comes into the converted man from God cannot die. How often do we ring in the ears of our friends those glorious words of our Lord, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Happy is the man to whose house salvation comes, for it comes to stay, world without end!

That must suffice for the first head, This day—what? II. Now, secondly, we are to think of another aspect of the subject,

that is, THIS DAY—WHY? Why had salvation come to the house of Zacchaeus that day?

I answer, because that day Zacchaeus was called by effectual Grace and whenever effectual Grace comes to anyone, it brings salvation. "Therefore, brethren," as Peter says, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure," for these are the "things that accompany salvation." If you are sure that you are called of God, you may be quite certain that you are saved, for "this day"—the day in which a man is effectually called by Grace—this day does salvation come to his house. Look, dear Friends, God chose His people in His everlasting purpose, but salvation did not come to their houses that day. They knew nothing of it at that time, for they were not then born! Christ redeemed His people when He died on the Cross, but salvation did not come to their houses that day, for the most of them were not then in existence. But, in the fullness of time, the Gospel was preached to them and they heard it. Yet, in all cases, salvation did not come to their houses that day, for though they heard it, they refused it. But the moment that effectual Grace says to anyone, "Today I must abide at your house," that Grace at once gains admission and salvation comes, then and there, to that man's house. You remember how the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "Whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified"? These great blessings are joined together, like the links of a chain, and you cannot pull them apart! There is the calling that fits into the justification and the chain is so made that the two links never can be separated. And then justification fits into glorification in such a way that you

cannot possibly part them. It is no use for anyone to try to separate them. The devil may pull and hammer as much as ever he likes, but all his efforts will be in vain. I have sometimes likened that passage in Romans to a vast suspension bridge between earth and Heaven—"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. 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." If you get your foot firmly resting on that great plank of effectual calling, you may be quite sure that you will be able to cross all the rest of the bridge and will most certainly reach the other side—and be "forever with the Lord." But how do we know that Zacchaeus was really called? I answer in such a way that you may know whether you, also, are called or not. The call of Zacchaeus was an effectual call, first, because it was a personal call. He was up in the sycamore tree and He heard Christ call, "Zacchaeus!" "Why," he said to himself, "That is my name. He is calling me." "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down." "Then He can see that I am up here! His description exactly fits my case." Now, when you come and hear me preach the Gospel, I try to put the Truth of God before you in a clear and very pointed manner. Some people say that it is wrong to be personal in preaching, but I always try to be as personal as I can. Yet I know that many of my hearers pass on to their neighbors and friends what I say to them. "Oh, that just fits Mrs. So-and-So," says somebody. No, my dear Sir—it is meant for you, but you will not take it home to yourself. But when the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, calls, then the man says, "Dear me! I do not believe that the preacher can see me right here, yet he is speaking straight at me. I am sure that he is. How amazing! He just mentioned something that cannot have occurred to anybody but me. He has exactly described my case."

Those are the times when God is about to bless the soul—when the man feels himself picked out from the rest of the congregation and the Gospel sharpshooter is just covering him with His rifle of Grace! I pray that the blessed bullet of the Gospel may find its mark in the very center of your heart and bring you down at the feet of Jesus as a weeping penitent! "Zacchaeus!" The Lord knew that was the name of the man up the sycamore and He also knows your name and your character. And when He means to call you by His effectual Grace, He will hold your photograph up and make you say, "Yes, that is my portrait! There is nobody else exactly like that."

Next, it was a royal call. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today I must abide at your house." One of our proverbs says, "Must is for the king." And when the King speaks, He must be obeyed! We who are His ministers try to be very pressing and urgent, but when the Master Himself utters the call, where the word of that King is, there is power! I hope He is saying to someone here, "Today I must abide in your heart." Now you have come to the point when you, also, will have to say, "I must." There must be no turning back, now, dear Friend! You must not say to Christ, "Go your way for this time." No, but you must say, "This time is the time when I, also, will say, 'must,' as Christ says it to me." That is an effectual call when it comes as a royal mandate, a warrant from the King! "I must."

Then, next, it was a call which produced immediate obedience. The Lord said to Zacchaeus, "Make haste and come down." And we read, "He made haste and came down." I think I see him coming down that tree a great deal faster than he had gone up! He had not moved at such a rate as that for a long while, but he scurried down, for he was told to make haste by One whose command compelled him to obey. When the Lord Jesus Christ calls any of you effectually, you will not put off your decision till the next morning. You will not say, "I will wait till I can get home and

pray." You will not even say, "I will wait till the end of the service and then talk with a Christian," but your prayer will be, "Lord, help me to look to Jesus, now. I yield myself up to You this very instant. I am in a hurry about it. Lord, I am making haste to get to You! Make haste to come and save me. I would not delay a single second longer. I want to be Yours alone, and Yours at once." That is a mark of effectual calling, when immediate obedience is given to the call.

Another mark in the case of Zacchaeus was, that it was joyful obedience. "He made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully." Oh, the joy of the heart that receives Christ when Christ Himself does really come to the soul! The moment I believed in Christ, I wanted to shout, "Hallelujah," and if I had done so, I think that I might have been forgiven. The moment one believes in Christ and knows that his sin is all gone, what extravagance would be extravagant under such circumstances? Is not the man justified in being joyful when at length his iniquity is blotted out and his transgression is covered? It is a mark of effectual calling when we receive Christ joyfully. In the case of Zacchaeus, observe that his obedience was complete, for Christ said, "Today I must abide at your house" and, "he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully" at his house, for the people murmured because Christ had gone to be his guest. Now, dear Friends, will you also receive Christ? That is the point. Are you willing to let Him come to you and be your salvation? Are you eager that He should come? Do you beg Him to Come? Depend upon it, He will come to you when you are ready to receive Him—but mind you— do not trust for salvation to anything else or anyone else but Christ! Be satisfied with nothing but the ever-living Savior to be your Savior from first to last.

There was yet one more mark of the effectual calling of Zacchaeus, and that was that He received Christ in a spiritual sense, for he did not only take Him into his house, but he took Him into his heart. I know that he did so because he began at once to purge his heart by driving out covetousness. That was a splendid way of getting rid of it when he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." Then he began to drive put his former grasping habit, for he said, "And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore to him fourfold." That was clear evidence that he meant to receive Christ in all His holy, gracious teaching, not merely as a man and a stranger, but, spiritually, as his Master, his Ruler, his Teacher, his Guide—in a word, as his Savior!

III. Now, lastly, THIS DAY—WHY NOT? And now, change the day altogether, for I mean this very day when I

am speaking to you, this first of October in the present year of Grace, 1882. "This day." This day—why not? Why should we not, "this day," give ourselves to Christ? I have tried to think of a reason why a man should not give himself up to the Lord Jesus Christ this day and I cannot find one. Then, why should he give himself to Christ this day, on this particular day? I think I know several reasons why he should do so. First, it is late enough. Surely you do not need to wait any longer! How old did you say you are, Friend? Seventy-six? Eighty-six? What? As old as that and not yet saved? You do not need one like me, so much younger, to urge you to a speedy decision. Or did you say that you are not more than my own age—not yet fifty? Well, I find it is quite late enough for me. There are certain influences and sensations creeping over me which make me realize that I am somewhat different from what I used to be—and I expect it is the same with you. I think it is getting rather late in life for you to be still undecided. Perhaps some younger person

says, "But I am only twenty-one." Well, that is late enough to be without Christ! It is a thousand pities that the devil should have had 21 years of your life. I was converted to the Lord Jesus Christ when I was fifteen, but I wish it could have been 15 years before. Oh, that I had known and loved Him as soon as I knew anything and had lisped His name with the first words I ever uttered! I think every Christian will say the same. Whatever our age is, the time past may well suffice to have worked the will of the flesh. Do not you think so, my Friend? Have not you had quite enough of sin? What profit have you ever received from it? It is surely quite late enough for you to receive Christ as your Savior!

And, further, it is late enough in the year. It seems to me, when the leaves are falling all around you, as if they all said to you, "We all do fade as a leaf," is it not fully time to seek the Lord? I know of no season that seems more suited for pensive thought than just now when the year seems to be weeping itself into its tomb—and burying itself amid falling leaves. Now is the time to yield yourself to the Lord! There cannot be a better period than just now—before yet the year is fully gone.

The mercy is, dear Friend, that though it is quite late enough, it is not too late for anybody here. There is yet time for you to seek the Lord! It is a pity to have put the Lord off until you have got into the sere and yellow leaf, but yet there is time to turn to Him! What? Have you reached the eleventh hour of life? It is late, it is very late, but still, it is not yet too late! It is not yet too late even if you are to die this week—and there are some out of this great company who will, I suppose, pass into the unseen world this week. Dear Friend, I know not who you are, but you who stand nearest to your eternal destiny, it is not yet too late even for you! I pray you, clutch at once at the great mercy now offered to you! God help you so to do!

Every week I have to hear of some out of our number who have passed away. There have been some this last week, and some whom I certainly thought we might have had with us for a long time. They were, apparently, in good health, yet now they are to be buried at the beginning of the week, for they have gone from us quite suddenly. And why may not some of you be the next to be taken? Do not postpone your decision any longer—I would that we could say tonight, "This day, October 1st, some soul did receive salvation! Let the recording angel mark it down." The harvest is not quite over, though I thought it was. We down south have almost forgotten it, but there is a farming friend up with us today, who said to me, "We have not finished our harvest, for we have not got the beans in yet." So, you see, the harvest is not quite over, but I do not want you to have to say, The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." I would like to get some of you to come in with the beans, just with the last crop. Oh, that you might be brought to Christ just at this end of the harvest! The Master is willing that you should come to Him even now, so do not delay. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation!"

Remember, also, that today is Gospel time. Still is Christ preached to you! The door of mercy is still set open before you! "Come," is still the cry uttered by the Spirit, and the bride, the Lamb's wife echoes it, "Come!" Still the Water of Life is freely flowing for all who are willing to receive it!

Recollect, too, that this is praying time. You are still on praying ground. A prayer will yet find God. A traveler tells us that when he was in the East, he saw the procession of a Sultan passing through a certain city. The monarch was there—all bedizened with gems and every kind of barbaric ornament and surrounded by his guards. There was a poor wretch who wanted to get a petition to

the Sultan, but he did not know how to manage it. He had no money with which to bribe the officials and he could not force his way through the armed men. So, in his desperation, he got near enough to throw the petition down at the monarch's feet, but one of the soldiers stuck a spear through it and he held it aloft—and that was the end of it, for the Sultan took no notice of the incident—he was much too great a man to attend to the petition of his poor subject. It is never so with God! Cast your petition—now you may—at His dear feet! He will answer it and send you on your way rejoicing!

You are not only on praying ground, for tonight seems to me to be a very auspicious season, for it is Communion time. God's people are presently coming together around His Table to remember Christ. Will you not also remember Him? We are about to receive Christ spiritually through the emblems of bread and wine which will set Him forth to us. Why should not you also receive Christ, in a spiritual fashion, by faith, as your Savior? Oh, that you would press through the throng and bow at the feet of Jesus Christ, our Lord! If you do so, He will accept you, and again it shall be said, "This day is salvation come to this house." God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Luke 18:35-43; Luke 19:1-10.

Luke 18:35-39. And it came to pass, that as He was come near unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! And they who went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. "Hush," they cried, "how can you disturb the blessed Master's discourse? Be quiet."

39, 40. But he cried so much the more, Son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still. Prayer held Him fast. Here is a stationary Savior, held in His place by the cries of a blind man. Oh, the power of prayer! It stays the onward march of the Son of God. "Jesus stood still."

40, 41. And commanded him to be brought to Him: and when he was come near, He asked him saying, What do you want Me to do for you? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. It is a great thing to know what you really need. There are some persons who are so blind that they do not know that they are blind—and because they say, "We see," therefore is their blindness the more intense! I fear that there is many a person who professes to pray, yet who, if Christ should come into the room and say, "What do you want Me to do for you?" would not know how to answer the question. This man did. He said, very briefly, and very clearly, but in a very full way, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive your sight. Often, the blessing from Christ's lips is the echo of the prayer which fell from ours. The blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Echo answered, "Receive your sight."

42, 43. Your faith has saved you. And immediately he received his sight. See how the prayer, the Word of Christ and the immediate effect of it, all tally? "That I might receive my sight." "Receive your sight." "He received his sight."

43. And followed Him. Christ likes not blind followers—"and followed Him."

43. Glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God. They seemed to be greatly impressed, but we shall see that some of them soon spoke in another fashion.

Luke 19:1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. There was to be a miracle at each end of Jericho. Long before, it had been cursed— now it was to have a double blessing!

2. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was the chief among the publicans. That is, tax-gatherers.

2. And he was rich. As they often were, for they farmed the taxes and then squeezed every farthing they could out of the people.

3. And he sought to see Jesus, who He was, and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. That was a fortunate thing for him. We need not all wish to be so tall as some people are. Perhaps Zacchaeus would not have gone up the sycamore tree if he had been a tall man. But the whole story turns upon something which many regard as a disadvantage—"he was little of stature."

4-7. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at your house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured. There is a great contrast between this verse and the last one in the previous Chapter—"All the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God." Here it is, "When they saw it, they murmured." Yet, very likely many of them were the same people! Certainly they were the same sort of people that we hear of every now and then! "When they saw it, they all murmured." There are far too many of that kind still about. We do not quite know who they are, nor where they are—they have a sort of nondescript, mysterious existence that finds expression in the words, "They say so-and-so and so-andso." They have been saying something about the minister, something about the Sunday school, something about the Bible class, something about your work and mine. You see, there always were such people about, and they always would talk, and their talk often took the form of complaining. "When they saw it, they all murmured,"

7. Saying, He has gone to be guest with a man who is a sinner. If He had not done so, He could not have gone anywhere, for all men are sinners! "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But this man was a sinner above others, for he had sold himself to the hated Roman power and was authorized to collect the conqueror's taxes from his own people. So, of course, in the estimation of the Jews, he was the worst kind of sinner that could be found anywhere.

8. And Zacchaeus stood. And he did not talk at all like a sinner! 8. And said unto the Lord; Beheld, Lord, the half of my goods I give to

the poor. Some of those saints, as they reckoned themselves, had not done anything like as much as that! "The half of my goods I give to the poor."

8. And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. Which restitution was an act of justice—and when charity and justice go hand in hand, what more can we expect of men?

9, 10. And Jesus said unto him, Today is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And that day He had both sought and saved one of the lost ones, for He had found Zacchaeus up in a sycamore tree, and He had brought salvation to the tax-gatherer's house. May He do the same for many who are here!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY

TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 2

Luke 19,10 #1100 Good News for the Lost

GOOD NEWS FOR THE LOST

NO. 1100

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 9, 1873,

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10.

THE promises of God are like stars, there is not one of them but has in its turn guided tempest-tossed souls to their desired haven. But as among the stars which stud the midnight sky there are constellations which above all others attract the mariner's gaze and are helpful to the steersman, so there are certain passages in Scripture which have not only directed a few wise men to Jesus, but have been guiding stars to myriads of simple minds who have, through their help, found the port of peace. I could mention a number of texts this morning which I might compare to the pointers of the Great Bear or to the Southern Cross because they have directly pointed the penitent eye to Jesus, the Pole Star, and by looking to Him, sinners have found "the way, the truth, and the life."

This text is one of the notable stars, or rather, its words form a wonderful constellation of Divine love, a very Pleiades of mercy. The words and syllables seem to glisten to my eyes with a supernal splendor. I bless God for every letter of this thrice blessed text—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." But as stars are of small service when the sky is all beclouded, or the air dense with fog, so it may be even such a bright Gospel light as our text will not yield comfort to souls surrounded with the clinging mists of doubts and fears. In such times mariners cry for fair weather and ask that they may be able to see the stars again.

So let us pray the Holy Spirit to sweep away, with His Divine wind, the clouds of our unbelief and enable each earnest eye in the light of God to see the light of peace. O that many awakened minds may find pardon and eternal life in the Savior this morning! God grant that in answer to the prayers now silently breathed by many, the blessing of salvation may come to this House.

I. There are four things I shall try to set forth this morning for the comfort of seeking sinners. The first is this—I would have all anxious hearts consider HOW THE OBJECTS OF MERCY ARE HERE DESCRIBED—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." I feel inexpressibly grateful for this description—"that which was lost!" There cannot be a case so bad as not to be comprehended in this word, "lost." I am quite unable to imagine the condition of any man of woman born so miserable as not to be contained within the circumference of these four letters—"lost."

The man may have gone to a perfect extravagance of vice. He may have ruined himself body and soul. He may be upon the very verge of Hell and feel as if he were slipping into the pit—but this word descends to the lowest depth of his misery, for he is "lost." Here and there upon our ironbound coasts there are harbors of refuge, but, unfortunately, some of them are only available for large vessels at certain times of the tide. At high-water, a vessel of large tonnage may enter them and find security, but if the tide runs out strongly, even though the harbor is there, there is not enough water to enable vessels of great weight to enter.

Behold, my text is a harbor of refuge available at all tides and even at the lowest ebb the biggest ships of heaviest tonnage may enter here! No matter, though the sinner should need a fathomless ocean of mercy to boat in, there is depth enough for him here! If the wind is blowing horribly this morning and the storms are out, and all the fiends out with the storms, yet, if the tempest-tossed soul can but make sail for this Divine Harbor—there is no sandbar at the mouth, no shallow water in the channel—there is no fear of its being able to enter! This harbor's mouth is exceedingly deep in mercy, for the text speaks of, "that which was lost." Souls lost through sin and folly are sought and saved by the Son of Man.

Let us consider how men are lost. We know, first, that they are lost by nature. However much men may rebel against the doctrine, it is a truth of Inspiration that we are lost even when we are born, and that the word, "lost," has to do, not only with those who have gone into sin grossly and wickedly, but even with all mankind. Did you ever notice the other place where this text occurs? It is in the 18th chapter of Matthew and the 11th verse, and it occurs there in a very significant relationship. Let me read you the words. Christ is speaking about little children, and He says, "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."

The Lord had placed a little child in the midst of the disciples and had declared that they must be converted and become as little children. And yet He uttered these words in that connection. From that passage it is clear that, by nature, little children are lost and they owe their salvation to the Lord Jesus, when God is pleased to carry them to Heaven in infancy. Jesus is come to seek and to save those who are lost by nature— and it is most certain that no man now perishes through Adam's sin, only, and no man is cast into Hell because of natural depravity alone—his own personal sin and unbelief cast him there.

A far more terrible matter for us, practically, is this, that we are, apart from Divine Grace, lost by our own actions. Our nature has revealed itself in our character. Our inward inclinations have developed themselves in our conduct and we have lost ourselves by our own acts and deeds. We have erred and strayed from God's ways willfully and wickedly like lost sheep—and now the word, "lost," belongs to us by our own overt acts, as well as through Adam's Fall. And in addition to that, we are lost because our actual sin and our natural depravity have co-worked to produce in us an inability to restore ourselves from our fallen condition. We are not only wanderers, but we have no will to come home—we are prodigal sons, but we never say, "I will arise, and go to my Father," until the Grace of God puts it into our hearts to do so. We are like sheep which wander and wander and wander, but will never, by any chance, return unless the Good Shepherd of souls shall seek us. If this world of ours could suddenly be left to itself, could forget the centripetal force which

holds it in alliance with the sun and could set out upon a fearful journey into the darkness of far-off space—if it should travel so far away that no longer could a single beam of light reach it from the sun and it were altogether in darkness—it is quite certain that it could never find the sun again, for who could light a candle upon the earth wherewith we might search for the sun? The sun can only be seen by its own light. Where upon earth would be found the bands and cords with which to draw us back to the sun? The world could only be drawn by an influence from the sun itself—the central orb must give the motive power.

So, when a soul wanders from God, it has no light in it with which to see God and no force in it to draw God to itself. God must enlighten and draw the soul to Him. So that, in this three-fold sense, we are lost by nature, by practice, and by an utter inability to find out our God and to return to Him. Yet, terrible as this lost estate is, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." In addition to this, we are all lost by the condemnation which our sin has brought upon us. We are sometimes told by inaccurate talkers that we are in a state of probation. My Brothers and Sisters, nothing can be more unscriptural than such a statement! We have long ago been proved and found wanting. Our probation is over. We are now, if unrenewed, in a state of condemnation!

The trial is not now pending—it is over and we are condemned, already, for our sins. The fearful sentence of condemnation hangs over every man here who has not believed in the Lord Jesus. The sinner is lost in that sense. It is but a matter of time and that time in God's hands—and the condemned man will be taken out to execution—and the punishment of Divine wrath will fall upon his guilty head. We are lost because we are under legal sentence and are unable to escape from it. We cannot make atonement to God for the wrong we have done, nor avoid His righteous jurisdiction. No mortifications of the body, no lamentations of the spirit, can wipe out a single sin—

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

So that, being before the bar of God regarded as condemned criminals, unregenerate men are lost, indeed.

More than this, there are certain persons in the world who are lost in a more apparent sense than others are—I mean that they are lost to society, to respect and perhaps to decency. That was the case with Zacchaeus, in connection with whom our text was spoken. I do not know what may have been his parentage. Possibly he was born of most reputable folk, but he showed a vicious mind and he turned aside from the good old paths. He loved low company and despised his father's seriousness. There was great grief in that household on his account. Zacchaeus was lost to his parents—they had hoped he would have been a credit to their name—but instead he was a dishonor. They trusted that he would be the staff of their old age, but now he was a scourge to them. They scarcely dared to whisper his name in any company, for he had joined with the men of Belial and mingled with the lewdest sort in the city. And by-and-by, as men go from bad to worse, Zacchaeus had taken up with the low and infamous trade of a tax-gatherer. He so pushed his way in it by his sharpness and hardness of heart that he became chief of the odious band of the extortionate oppressors of the people. The Pharisees, of course, never looked at him—they passed him by as though he were a dog—while the ordinary people of Jericho, when he was out of hearing, cursed him. Had he not exacted upon one—had he not oppressed another? His very name had a ban set upon it. He was lost to society.

But the Son of Man sought him and saved him, lost as he was! Society, to this day, has its rules, by the breach of which persons become outcasts. These rules are, some of them, commendable, but others are arbitrary, one-sided, cruel and hypocritical. We have sometimes heard men of the world ridicule what they are pleased to call the cant of the Church, but we take leave to say that there is no cant so desperately canting as the cant of the world. There occurred, not long ago, an instance of the world's relentless cruelty to those whom it is fashionable to brand with dishonor. A person who had, perhaps, fallen into sin in her earlier days, was restored to a respectable position—she was received in society among the noblest, but all of a sudden, dastardly lips revealed a secret—and a sin committed far back was raked up against her. From that day the world put away the woman, never asking her if she had repented, or taking her after-conduct into consideration.

The world is so pure and chaste and immaculate, that it shut out the erring one as if she had been a leper. Though itself reeking with foulest abominations, society feigns a virtuousness pure as the lily and chaste as the snow. The world is cold, hard, cruel towards a certain class of offenders. It receives into its embraces men who are, every inch of them, unclean—but a betrayed, deceived, broken-hearted woman the world shakes off as if she were a viper. This is the society which boasts its gallantry! This is the just, fair-dealing world! It caresses its noble rakes, but casts off the most penitent among the betrayed. Ah, hypocritical, canting world! Ah, hollow, lying world, to pretend to a virtue which you do not know! Rail not at the inconsistencies of religious men while your own are so glaring! Cruel tyrant, learn mercy and do justice before you become a judge of the servants of the Lord!

Now, the Son of man is come to seek and to save those whom the world puts outside its camp. The world says, "No." "Shame on her." "We will not speak to her." But Christ Jesus says, "I have come to pardon her, and to restore her, and she shall love Me much because much has been forgiven her!" There are other cases in which men, by their crimes, most justly place themselves outside the pale of society and for the preservation of order they are separated from the company of honest men. Now even these should have a door of hope left to them and a way of return. The cry, too often is, "Down with him! Down with him! He has sinned against his fellow men. Put him aside! What do we care what becomes of him?"

But the Son of Man who is infinitely pure and holy, who has a genuine horror of sin so that He really hates it and loathes it, yet does not loathe sinners, but has come to seek and to save them! The sweep of Divine compassion is not limited by the customs of mankind! The boundaries of Jesus' love are not to be fixed by Pharisaical self-righteousness! "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Putting all that we have said into a few words, we would thus speak—I may be addressing persons here who feel that they have broken God's Laws, perhaps by no means publicly or in any of the grosser vices, but they have broken the Laws of God.

They may feel that they have and are sorrowing in their hearts because of it. They fear, also, that they have sinned in such a way that it cannot be possible for them to be forgiven. At the same time the hardness of their hearts astounds them—they feel themselves to be altogether bad and that no good thing dwells within them. They, therefore, despair of being saved. Beloved Friends, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Does not the description suit you? Are you not among the lost? Well then, you are among such as Jesus Christ came to save! And if

perchance there should be one here who has fallen into the grosser vices, someone who has sullied his name and degraded himself to the very lowest degree, I am bound not to restrict the text and I do not desire to do so—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

O you lost ones! O you ruined and destroyed ones! The Son of Man is come to seek and to save you! The Greek word here used for lost is a form of that word which has, by certain modern discoverers, been translated, "annihilated," with a view to buttressing their unscriptural theory of the annihilation of the wicked. It is one of those instances in which the absurdity of such an interpretation ought to be evident even to themselves! The Son of Man has not come to seek and to save that which is annihilated—that would be rank nonsense! But the word is very forcible and signifies a destruction very terrible, a ruin of the most solemn kind. To be lost is to be fallen altogether, to be destroyed as to all good, to be utterly undone, yet the Lord Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save such as are in this wretched plight!

Why, this text sounds to me like the ringing of joyful Sunday bells which sometimes mariners have heard at sea! Ships are sometimes surrounded with a dense fog and the mariners know not whether they are near the land or on the wide ocean—they lie becalmed with no stir in the air, no stir in the sea—the ship is like a lost thing without power of motion or knowledge of her whereabouts. And then suddenly the mariners have heard bells ringing on the blessed Sunday and as the silver sounds have pierced the gloomy mist the mariners have known that they were somewhere near Old England's happy shores!

My text rings out most sweetly through the fogs of your soul's despair and doubt and I trust the glad message— "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"—will reach you!

II. Now, let us turn to another point. There is very much of consolation in our text for the guilty, in the second place, if they notice HOW THE SAVIOR IS HERE DESCRIBED, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." As the Son of Man He is come. And here note, first of all, His Deity. You say, "Deity, how is that? The text says 'the Son of Man.'" Yes, and that is the point upon which I ground my remark. No Prophet or Apostle needed to call himself by way of distinction the son of man. It would be ridiculous for any one of us to speak of himself emphatically as the son of man—it would be an affectation of condescension supremely absurd.

Therefore, when we hear our Lord particularly and especially calling Himself by this name, we are compelled to think of it as contrasted with His higher Nature and we see a deep condescension in His choosing to be called the Son of Man, when He might have been called the Son of God. O my Soul, He who is come to save you, is so plainly God that He sees reason to remind you that He is also the Son of Man, lest you should doubt it! No angel's arm is stretched out for your help, but the arm of Him who created all worlds!

In speaking of Himself as the Son of Man, our Lord shows us that He has come to us in a condescending Character. Not in flames of fire has Jesus descended from Heaven. Not in His chariot of wrath, girt with the sword of vengeance, does Jehovah Jesus come to men. He is come upon His errand of mercy as One who has lain upon a woman's breast, who has known weakness, suffering and need. He is come as One who knows, by personal experience, the lowliness of your

estate. Oh, Sinner, is it not joy to know that the Son of God has come to save you as the Son of Man? "The Son of Man"—that describes also the tenderness of His Character.

A man can sympathize with a man. Jesus, the tender-hearted One, was full of sympathy and in loving gentleness He is come to save sinners. He is no stern Rhadamanthus, no judge of severe countenance, no Draco with bloody edicts, but Jesus, the Man of Sorrows and the acquaintance of grief. It is as your Brother, touched with a feeling of your infirmities, that Jesus comes to you. He has, moreover, come in His mediatorial Character, for, "There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." He can put His hand upon you, and, at the same time, lay His hand upon God. He who bridges the gulf between the misery of fallen manhood and the eternal dignity of the unsullied God is come to save the lost! What a joy is this!

Our Lord is come in His representative Character, for He calls Himself the Son of Man, as if to note that He is Man for men, the representative Man, the Son of Man. He is come as the Covenant Substitute, representing Man. He has suffered in our place, died in our place, paid our debts in our place, risen in our place, and gone to Heaven as our Forerunner! It is the Son of Man who, in all things, has acted for men, who is, "come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, it seems to me, dear Friends, if the Spirit of God would only help poor troubled hearts to see it, that the wording of this part of my text, though very simple, is full of the richest consolation.

Soul, what an attractive Savior have you to deal with! God is a consuming fire—you cannot, O guilty one, go to Him—but Jesus is your Brother, your Friend. He is the Friend of Sinners who received them and ate with them. And He it is, great as He is, who is "come to seek and to save that which was lost." I tell you what I would have you do. Go to Him without fear or trembling before yon sun goes down and ends this day of mercy. Go and tell Him you have broken the Father's Laws—tell Him that you are lost and you need to be saved. Tell Him that He is a Man, and appeal to His manly heart and to His brotherly sympathies.

Pour out your broken heart at His feet—let your soul flow over in His Presence—and I tell you He cannot cast you away! Though your prayers are feeble as the spark in the flax, He will not quench them! And though your heart is bruised like a reed, He will not break it! May the Holy Spirit bless you with a desire to go to God through Jesus Christ. And may He encourage you to do so by showing that Jesus is meek and lowly of heart, gentle, and tender, and full of pity.

III. I pass on to our third point and that, also, is full of comfort, though I will only touch upon it. You that seek salvation should joyfully observe HOW OUR LORD'S PAST ACTION IS DESCRIBED—"The Son of Man is come." Note, not, "shall come," but, "IS come." His coming is a fact accomplished. We could not have said this before the days of Bethlehem's wondrous birth. We would have had to say the Son of Man "will come," and then you would have needed extraordinary faith to believe that the Son of God would become the Son of Man to save you. But He "is come." That part of the salvation of a sinner which is yet to be done is not at all so hard to be believed as that which the Lord has already accomplished.

That Jesus Christ, after being Incarnate, and after having suffered for sin, should pardon sinners for whom He has died does not seem to me to be extraordinary—the extraordinary matter lies in this, that He should come from Heaven, that He should be born in Bethlehem, that He should tarry here on earth, that He should go up to the Cross and down to the grave and bear and suffer in the

sinner's place—yet, our Lord has done all that. The greatest part of the work He has accomplished! Your salvation, if you believe in Jesus, is comparatively an easy matter—He has but to apply that which is already prepared and hand over to your faith that which He has laid by in store.

The state of the case since Jesus has come may be illustrated thus— Certain of our fellow countrymen were the prisoners of the Emperor Theodore, in Abyssinia, and I will suppose myself among them as a captive. I hear that the British Parliament is stirring in the direction of an expedition for my deliverance and I feel some kind of comfort, but I am very anxious, for I know that amidst party strifes in the House of Commons many good measures are shipwrecked. Days and months pass wearily on, but at last I hear that Sir Robert Napier has landed with a delivering army. Now my heart leaps for joy! I am shut up within the walls of Hagdala but in my dungeon I hear the sound of the British bugle and I know that the deliverer is come! Now I am full of confidence and am sure of liberty! If the general is already come, my rescue is certain!

Mark well, then, O you prisoners of hope, that Jesus is come! Do you not hear it? The Gospel bugle is sounding! Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! The Captain of our salvation is come! He is at our dungeon gates! He has come to our rescue! He is come! He is come! Jesus has come and by His Holy Spirit He is still here! And we may depend upon it, that if He has actually come to the work, He means to go through with it, for He never draws back His hand. When He said He would save men, it was certain He would do so. And now He has come to do it, it is more than certain!

Behold the Lord of Glory has disrobed Himself for work. He has hung up His royal robes and put on a workman's garb, a human toiler's garments! He means work, stern, persevering work. He has cast His azure mantle across the sky and come down here to the city of David robed in mortal clay to wear the garment without seam. O, Sirs, He means to do His Father's business! He is in real earnest, be sure of that—He has come to do it and means to accomplish His design of love. Besides, He is not like a foolish one who comes to His work and leaves His tools behind Him—Jesus would not come unprepared! The Son of Man is an infinitely wise Savior and you may depend upon it, having come with His Father's consent and anointed with the Holy Spirit, He is come with everything that is needed to accomplish His purpose.

He is come to do a work which He can do and will do, and in which He will not be baffled though all the powers of earth and Hell should contend with Him. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." My heart rejoices as I feel how sure it is that the lost ones will be saved. If we had heard the sons of the morning sing in solemn symphony, "God Himself has come to scatter the primeval darkness, to bring order out of chaos, and to create life in the earth which lies without form and void," we should have felt certain of the result! If God had come to create, He would create—and it would have been no matter of surprise to us to have seen the round earth glowing in the morning light, verdant with newborn vegetation and populous with variety of life.

We are sure that what God comes to do He will do. In the night when Israel was pursued by the Egyptians and overtaken at the sea, even at the Red Sea, it was a sign of victory when the Lord came to deliver His people. The pillar of cloud went to the rear, turning its black side on the foe and its bright side on the chosen. God was come to smite Pharaoh and to rebuke the proud tyrant! And oh, you might be sure He would do it—failure was out of the question. When, next morning,

the placid deep swept over the angry armies and all was peace where Pharaoh and his hosts had raged so furiously—and instead of the shouts of men-at-arms—were heard the sweet voices of damsels, singing, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," it was but natural it should be so, for if God came to avenge His Israel! Who could stand before Him?

The Son of Man is come to save. Rejoice, you heavens, and be glad, O earth! He will do all His pleasure! Neither earth nor Hell can stand against Him! Seeking, He will save! Yes, He will save that which is lost! All glory be unto His name!

IV. The last point is to be this—there is much of deepest comfort in THE DESCRIPTION WHICH IS HERE GIVEN OF OUR LORD'S WORK. He is come "to seek and to save." The enterprise is one, but has two branches. I would have you first notice what our Lord has not come to do. He has not come to aid those who, in their own esteem, are almost as good as they ought to be, to become a little better and so to enter Heaven by their own efforts. I believe that such is the general persuasion of mankind. If they were to put their beliefs into plain English their notion is as nearly as possible what I have said. According to them you are to attend a place of worship regularly, say prayers, give to the poor and be as good as ever you can. And then, inasmuch as there will be a little bit in which you will be lacking, you are to trust to Jesus Christ to make up the rest.

Now, mark my word, this is a gross and fatal delusion! There is not between the two covers of this Bible one single word of hope held out to any man who believes in that manner—no, but there is the solemn utterance that Christ has not come to save people of that sort at all, for thus it is written—"The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse. If any of you are very good people and have no sins. If you have done no wrong and are nearly as good as you ought to be. If you only need just to say a little about the blood of Christ, Christ has not come to save such as you are—He has "come to seek and to save that which was lost." If you are not lost you have no part nor lot in this matter!

Moreover, the Lord Jesus has not come to aid us in self-sufficient endeavors to save ourselves. I wonder how Christian people can sing that verse—

"A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify; A never-dying soul to save, And fit it for the sky."

It might suit a Jew at the foot of Sinai, but a Christian should have none of it! If we have to save our own souls it is all over with us. What? Can we fit our souls for the sky? We, save our own souls? Why, this is the clean opposite of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The theory of some is that there is much natural goodness in men and they have only to work it out and gradually improve themselves into a state of Grace. No, Sir, you are on the wrong tack. Do you know what is the very first ceremony of the Christian religion?

"Yes," you say, "Baptism." So it is. And what is Baptism? "Buried with Christ in Baptism." Who are buried, then? Living people? No! Dead people. The very first lesson of the Gospel, after believing in Christ, is that you are, before the Law, dead, through having been crucified with Christ, and therefore you must be buried. There is no improving your old nature, mending it up and beautifying it into perfection—the thing is hopeless, and it must die and be buried! The Scripture does not say, "You must be improved." "You must be born-again"—that is quite another thing. You must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become

new." A new creation is needed—not an improvement of the old creature.

What does the Apostle say?—"The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be." There he ends it— "Neither, indeed, can be." It is all over with the flesh, for corruption has seized upon it. This the Believer accepts as fact, "because," says the Apostle, "we thus judge, that if One died for all, then all died." The death of Jesus, as a punishment for sin, was our death and we died in Him so that we now live as new men, and risen men, and not as though the old life had been improved into something better! The old nature is put into the place of death and then the man receives life in Christ—that is how we are saved—not by improving ourselves into something better, but by being newly created by the Divine power of the Holy Spirit.

"Very discouraging," says one. Yes! And such discouragement is much needed now-a-days. If I saw a man trying to climb to the top of a mountain by a path which was quite impassable and full of dangers, I should be his true friend if I discouraged him from dashing himself to pieces. The way to Heaven is not by our own works. You who think that you can climb to Heaven by the way of Sinai should look to the flames that Moses saw— and sink and tremble, and despair! There is no road to God by the way of Sinai! There, at Calvary, is the way—all crimson with the Savior's blood. Salvation is ours through His atoning Sacrifice—"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Now, having cleared away the rubbish, let us come to the Truth of God. Jesus is come to seek the lost. He did that personally. There was a lost woman at Samaria and Jesus said He must go through Samaria. There was a lost man at Jericho and Jesus said He must abide in that man's house. What He did personally He now does under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in His Providence. Sometimes Providence takes away a child, lays a man on a bed of sickness, deprives him of his wealth—and all these trials are intended to bring him to Jesus. It is Jesus seeking him. It is an odd thing, my Friend, that you should be here this morning—you did not reckon upon being here. Strange circumstances brought you.

Suppose the Lord means to save you this morning? Then the Providence which brought you to this spot is Jesus seeking you. As our Lord seeks souls by His Providence He also seeks them by the Word. It is very wonderful how the Word of God will come home to people. It is a part of every preacher's business, who is sent of God, so to preach that persons in the congregation may perceive that he speaks of them. What remarkable things have happened in our ministry and in the ministries of all who are sent of God.

Why, they speak to people as if they knew them! Though they never saw them before, they tell their case and picture their state. God guides His servants and gives them words that they never thought of till the time came to utter them, so that on the spur of the moment they pick out the character as well as if they had known the man from childhood! Thus Jesus seeks the sinner. If there is anything in this sermon which suits your case, dear Friend, do not talk about what relation it may have to anybody else, but be sure Jesus is seeking you! Are you a lost one? Have you come here in such a condition of heart that you cannot deny your lost state? Jesus is seeking you!

Look how the Lord saved Zacchaeus. It seemed an odd thing that when the Lord was under the tree, He should look up and say, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down." But Jesus does the

same thing, still, in the preaching of the Gospel. He applies the Word with power to individual consciences and makes men perceive that He speaks of them. God has a message of love to their souls and they are compelled to hear it—they cannot shut their ears to it—they must receive it for the Spirit of God comes with it and sends it home with power to their soul. That is Jesus seeking sinners. And whom Jesus seeks He saves.

There is the second part of it—"To seek and to save." And how is the saving done? That is done, first of all, by the complete pardon of all the sinner's sins. The very instant that a man trusts Christ with all his heart, the past is blotted out as if it had never existed—all the sins he has ever committed in thought, in word, in deed, however crimson in color, go at once—they are sunk as in the sea, never to be found again. And this is done upon this one solitary condition—that the sinner believe in Jesus! And even that is not a condition, for He that bade him believe enables him to believe and gives him the faith which saves his soul!

Then the sinner is saved in another way. From the moment that a person believes in Jesus his nature becomes different from what it was before—he receives a new heart—another influence takes possession of him. Another love engrosses him. When a man is absorbed by some masterpassion, what a different man he becomes! The passion for wealth will work marvels! We have known idle persons become very diligent and profuse voluptuaries become even self-denying and mortifying to their flesh in their ambition to acquire riches. Now, God gives us another passion—the passion of gratitude to Christ, and love to the God that saved us—and that becomes a master-principle and rules the entire man.

He who loved self now loves God and lives for Him. And is that change possible to the most degraded? Yes, possible with God. If a man has committed every crime in the whole catalog of villainy and his heart has become hard as the nether millstone—and his disposition altogether base, mean, groveling, sensual and devilish—the Spirit of God can turn that man, in a single moment, into a lover of that which is true and right and just! He can break his heart concerning the past, make him angry with himself for having lived as he has done and can passionately inflame him with the desire to be perfectly holy!

And that passion within the man can carry him on until he loves his fellow creatures as himself and makes great sacrifices for them—and all for the sake of Jesus, that blessed, crucified Son of Man, who came "to seek and to save that which was lost." We do not preach that Christ forgives men and then lets them live as before. But we assert that the moment He gives the pardon of sin, He gives the new nature, too. The Gospel hospital is not merely a place where lepers are harbored, but where lepers are healed— "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Brothers and Sisters, let us cry to Jesus this morning to save us! I will put myself down among the lost by nature and by practice. If there is no one else here that is lost by nature, I am such, and I bless my Lord that He is "come to seek and to save" me, a lost man. Brothers and Sisters, some of you have known His love for many years. Did you not come at first to Him as lost ones? And will you not confess, this morning, that were it not for His infinite mercy you would still be as lost as ever? What a mercy it is to know we are lost and to trust to Christ who saves the lost! What a blessing to be among the dead who died in Christ, whose life is a new life in Him—"for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Martin Luther speaks in his book on Galatians of cutting the devil's head off with his own sword—"There," says Martin to the devil, "you say I am a great sinner. I thank you for that, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and so I feel He came to save me." And if the devil says to any one of you this morning, "You are lost altogether," off with his head, my Brother, my Sister—with his own sword, and this very day rejoice that "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Is there anyone here who is not lost? Anyone in this congregation who does not need saving? Well, then, I cannot say, in God's name, a single word of consolation to you. You are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, so you say. But this is what the Lord says to you—"He has put down the mighty from their seat, and He has exalted them of low degree: He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away." That is the only Gospel for you! But every poor, heavyladen, troubled heart—and every soul that feels itself to be lost by nature has this gracious word—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to gave that which was lost."

The last word is this—Let us who are saved seek the lost ones. Jesus did it. O follower of Jesus, do likewise! Is there any work that you could undertake among the worst of people? Undertake it! Never be ashamed of mingling with the poorest of the poor and the vilest of the vile, for Christ's sake. I always feel intense satisfaction at the remembrance of such useful members of our Church as Brother Orsman, engaged as he is from day to day in the very worst part of London, in Golden Lane, seeking that which is lost.

I hope there are many here imitating him. I know there are some. There is room for many more laborers in that department to seek those that are lost—pre-eminently lost. You need not, however, go to Golden Lane, or Seven Dials—there are plenty of lost people around you—lost people who come to the Tabernacle, lost people who go to Church and lost people who go nowhere on Sunday. Go and seek them! If you are saved yourself, I beseech you by the blood that bought you, by the Christ who loved you, and by the Christ whom you love, go out this very day to seek and to save that which was lost! Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE, SERMON—Luke 19:1-27.

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Luke 19,10 #204 - The Mission of the Son of Man _P

THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN

(Particular Redemption)

NO. 204

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 11, 1858,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10.

How fond our Master was of the sweet title, the "Son of Man"! If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Prince of Peace. He has a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of Heaven, but He cares not to use them. To express His humility and let us see the lowliness of Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, He calls not Himself the Son of God, but He speaks of Himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from Heaven.

Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Savior. Let us never court great titles, nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that has the most of them is a worm still and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called Himself the Son of Man when He had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbles himself shall in due time be exalted.

Methinks, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much that He always desired to honor it. And since it is a high honor and, indeed, the greatest dignity of manhood that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, He desires to display this name, that He may, as it were, put rich stars upon the breast of manhood and put a crown upon its head. Son of Man— whenever He said that word He seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam's children.

Yet there is perhaps a more lovely thought still. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of Man because He loved to be a man. It was a great stoop for Him to come from Heaven and to be Incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when He left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubim to mingle with the vulgar herd of His own creatures. But condescension though it were, He loved it. You will remember that when He became incarnate He did not become so in the dark. When He brings forth the only begotten into the world He said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

It was told in Heaven. It was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it. But all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Savior a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin's breast and lying in a manger. And ever afterwards and even now, He never blushed to confess that He was Man—never looked back upon His incarnation with the slightest regret. He always regarded it with a joyous recollection, thinking Himself thrice happy that He had ever become the Son of Man. All hail blessed Jesus! We know how much You love our race. We can well understand the greatness of Your mercy towards Your chosen ones, inasmuch as You are evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of Your bone and flesh of Your flesh and You are one of them, a Brother and a near kinsman!

Our text announces as a declaration of our Savior, that He, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning I shall simply divide my discourse thus—First, I shall lay it down as a self-evident Truth, that whatever was the intention of Christ in His coming into the world that intention most certainly shall never be frustrated. We shall then in the second place, look into the intention of Christ, as announced in the text, viz., "to seek and to save that which was lost." Then, in concluding, we shall derive a word of comfort and perhaps one of warning, from the intention of our Savior in coming into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost."

I. You are aware that there has been a very great discussion among all Christians about the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called general redemption, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ has shed His blood for every man and that the intention of Christ in His death was the salvation of men considered as a whole. They have, however, to overlook the fact that in this case Christ's intention would be frustrated in a measure.

There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ never was the salvation of all men. For if Christ had designed the salvation of all men, we hold that all men would have been saved. We believe that the intention of Christ's death is just equal to its effects, and therefore I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident Truth—that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world—that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

But I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be inconsistent with the very idea of God that He should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished. When I look at man I see him to be a creature so distracted with folly and so devoid of power that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish. I do not marvel that full often he stops short because he has not counted the cost. I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man's control that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition.

I see man to be the insect of a day, a mere speck upon the bay leaf of existence. And when I see him as a mere drop in the great sea of creation, I do not wonder that when he is ambitious he sometimes fashions in himself great designs which he is unable to accomplish because the

wheels of Providence and destiny will often run quite contrary to all the frolic of his will. But when I think of God whose name is, "I AM that I AM," the selfexistent One, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty God. When I think of Him as filling immensity, having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom—I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of His ever failing in any of His intentions.

It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in His intention would not be God—but be a thing like ourselves—perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship. I cannot think of God as a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a Being who wills and it is accomplished. Who speaks and it is done. Who commands and it stands fast—forever—settled in Heaven. I cannot therefore imagine, since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that in His atonement and redemption His real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. If I were a Socinian and believed Jesus Christ to be a mere man, I could, of course, imagine that the result of His redemption would be uncertain. But believing that Jesus Christ was very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of His death shall remain unaccomplished.

But again, we have before us the fact, that up to now, all the works of God have accomplished their purpose. Whenever God has uttered by the lips of His servants a prophecy, it has surely come to pass. The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men. They had no intention whatever of serving God. They have run contrary to His Laws. But you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, His bit has been still in their mouth and His bridle in their jaws.

A great monarch has acted like leviathan in the sea—he has moved himself wherever he pleased. He has seemed mighty among the sons of men—all the rest of mankind were as minnows, while he was a huge leviathan. But we discover that God has been overruling his thoughts, that He has been in his council chamber, that the wildest speculations of his ambition have, after all, been but the fulfilling of Jehovah's stern decrees. Look abroad through all the nations of the earth and tell me—is there one prophecy of God that has failed? May He not still say, "Not one of them has lost her mate"?

Every Word of God has certainly been accomplished. The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us. But He that sits in the heavens did laugh at them. The Lord did have them in derision. Still He worked His own sovereign will. Let them do as they pleased, God was over them all, reigning and ruling evermore. If, then, God's purpose in Providence certainly never has been frustrated, am I to imagine that God's purpose in the glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void? If there are any of you who have arrived at such a contortion of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves. With you I could not argue—I should think you incapable of an argument. Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, has in all things done according to His own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment, that when He stoops Himself from the highest Heaven, to give His own heart's

blood for our redemption, He shall in that be foiled! No, though earth and Hell are against Him, every purpose of Jesus on the Cross shall be consummated and as the price was "finished," so shall the purchase be. As the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle.

But again, I invite you to stand at the foot of the Cross and take a view of Jesus Christ. And then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, Believer, place yourself in the garden of Gethsemane, hide yourself among those dark olives and listen to yonder Man who is in agony. Do you hear those groans? They are the groans of an incarnate God. Do you hear those sighs? They are the sighs of the Son of Man, God over all, blessed forever. Do you hear those strong cries and do you see those tears? They are the crying and the tears of Him who is equal with His Father, but who condescended to be a Man.

Rise, for He has risen, Judas has betrayed Him and taken Him away. Look on that ground. Do you see those clots of gore? It is the bloody sweat of the Man Christ Jesus. I beseech you, answer this question. Standing in the garden of Gethsemane, with those blood clots staining the white frost of that cold midnight, can you believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purpose? I challenge you, O Christian, whatever your doctrinal opinions, to say to me, "Yes," to such a question as that!

Can you imagine that a sweat of blood from the veins of incarnate Deity shall ever fall to the ground and fail? Why, Beloved, the Word of God which comes forth out of His mouth shall not return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases. How much more shall the Great WORD of God, which came forth from the loin of Deity, accomplish the purpose whereunto God has sent Him, and prosper in the thing for which it pleased God to ordain Him!?

But now come with me to the hall of judgment. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiers. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks, how they pluck His hair, how they buffet Him? Do you see the crown of thorns with its ruby drops of gore? Hark! Can you hear the cry of the multitude, as they say, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"? And will you now stand there and look at this Man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the lash of the scourge, covered with shame and spit and mockery and as this "Ecce Homo" is presented to you, will you believe that this, the incarnate Son of God, shall be made such a spectacle to men, to angels and to devils—and yet fail of His design? Can you imagine that one lash of that whip shall have a fruitless aim? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting and yet endure what was far worse—a disappointment in the fulfillment of His intentions? No, God forbid! No! By Gethsemane and Gabbatha, we are pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by His death must certainly be accomplished.

Then again, see him hanging on His Cross. The nails have pierced His hands and feet and there in the broiling sun He hangs—He hangs to die. The mockery has not ceased. Still they put out the tongue and wag the head at Him. Still they taunt Him with, "If you are the Son of God come down from the Cross." And now His bodily pains increase, while His soul's anguish is terrible even unto death. Christian, can you believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain? Can you look at one of those precious drops as it trickles from His head or His hands or His feet and can you imagine that it shall fall to the ground and perish there? Trust the waters may fail from the sea, the sun may grow dim with age, but I never can imagine that the value, the merit, the power of the blood of

Jesus ever shall die out, or that its purpose shall be unaccomplished. It seems to me as clear as noonday, that the design of the Savior's death must certainly be fulfilled—be it what it may.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that His purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish His design of saving the lost, for He has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of His own design, for, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of power, for where there is omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength.

Nor again can the design be unaccomplished because it was unwise, for God's designs cannot be unwise, simply because they are of God—that is to say—they are of infinite wisdom. I cannot see anything in the Character of Christ, nor anything the wide world over, that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die and yet it should be said afterwards, "This Man died for a purpose which He never lived to see accomplished—the object of His death was only partially fulfilled. He saw of the travail of His soul, but He was not satisfied, for He did not redeem all whom He intended to redeem."

Now, some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men. It commends itself, they say, to the instincts of humanity. There is something in it full of joy and beauty. I admit there is. But beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might well admire in the theory of universal redemption but let me just tell you what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His Cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were damned before He died. If the doctrine is true, that He died for all men, He died for some that were in Hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were myriads there that had been cast away.

Once again, if it were Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed! We have His own evidence that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons who, according to that theory, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a thousand times more frightful than any of those horrors which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of Particular Redemption.

To think that my Savior died for men in Hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine—that He was the Substitute for the sons of men and that God having first punished the Substitute punished men again, seems to me to be in conflict with any idea of justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me, to be the most marvelous monstrosity that ever could have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, yes, to the god of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen demons. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the Just and Wise. If Christ has suffered in man's stead, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and save us from all unrighteousness.

II. I have thus stated the first thought that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now methinks everyone will anxiously listen and every ear will be attentive and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT THEN, WAS THE INTENTION OF THE SAVIOR'S DEATH? AND

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Savior die—and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which He has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us two things— first, the subjects of the Savior's atonement, the lost. And, secondly, the purpose of it—He came to seek and save.

I must now endeavor to pick out the objects of the Savior's atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Some of you may turn your heads away at once and conclude that up to now you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are very good sort of people. You never did much that was wrong—perhaps a little now and then. But nothing particular ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the kingdom of Heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbors and if you are not saved, God help other people! If you do not go to Heaven, who will?

You are trusting in your own good works and believing you are righteous. Now let us decide your case at once. Since you are ashamed to put yourselves among those who are lost, I have no Christ to preach to you till you are ready to come and confess that you are lost. For Christ himself tells us that He came, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And inasmuch as you belong to the righteous and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent, you may turn upon your heel and go. In the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own self-righteousness.

But I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, Sir, I know I am guilty, but still I am persuaded that by attention to the Law of God, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. I intend henceforward to reform and I believe that by a consistent course of attention to religious ordinances and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past." Ah, my Friend, up to now you give me no hope that you have any portion in the death of Christ. Christ came not to die for men who can save themselves without Him. If you think you can save yourself remember the door of mercy is shut in your face.

Christ came to bring robes from Heaven, but not for you who can spin for yourselves. He came to bring bread for the hungry, but He will give none of it to you who can sow and reap and make bread for yourselves. Christ helps the helpless, but they who can help themselves and have sufficient of their own strength and merit to carry them to Heaven may fight their way there alone, if they can—they shall have no help from Him. Whom, then, did Christ die to save? It is said, He came to save "that which was lost."

Now, you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost. And then I will conclude by noticing the term as it is used in the proper sense. We may affirm that Christ died for the lost. We know that all men are lost in Adam—as soon as we are born into this world, we are lost. When the tiny boat of the infant is launched upon the river of life it is lost. Unless Sovereign Grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy and carry it to Heaven or save it afterwards, when it shall have grown up—that infant is lost. "Behold," says David, "I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. In sin did my mother conceive me." "In Adam all die." The Fall of Adam was the fall of the human race. Then you and I and all of us fell down.

Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out like weeds immediately after the shower of rain—speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest and we grow up to sin and so we become lost by practice. But mark, a man may be lost in Adam and lost by practice and yet be saved by Christ. Christ is able to save you—though you are twice lost—His salvation is able to redeem you from death.

Then there are some who go further still. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller and some become lost to the Church. After having been trained up religiously in our midst, they turn aside—they give up all outward regard to the worship of God. The ministry of the Gospel is neglected, the house of prayer is forsaken and the Church tolls its bell and says of such an one, "He is lost to the Church." Some go further still. They are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in the midst of us the harlot and the drunkard, who, like the leper in the camp of Israel, have to be put away lest the contagion should spread. And those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from them lest the evil should spread in the midst of the flock.

Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save and whom He will save. But a man may be lost to society and may be lost everlastingly. It is no proof that Christ will save him, because he is thus lost—while at the same time it is no proof that He will not save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this. Again, the man may go further and be lost to the family. We have known those who have become so vile that even after society has shut them out a parent has been obliged to shut then out, too. That must be a Hell of sin, indeed, which can make a father say to his son, "My Son, you shall not want bread while I have any, but I must forbid you my house, for your brothers and sisters cannot endure your society. I feel you would destroy their souls if I should allow you to associate with them." Now, a man may be lost thus to his own family and yet Sovereign Grace will save him. But, mark, a man may be lost to his family and yet not be saved. Yes, that may be the increase of his condemnation, that he sinned against a mother's prayers and against a father's exhortations.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are lost to themselves. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm—the ship leaks and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining. They seek to keep down the devouring element. They still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved. They give it up for lost and leap into the boats.

The boats are beating for many a day, full of men who have but little food to eat. "They are lost," we say, "lost out at sea." But they do not think so. They still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship in the horizon. They strain their eyes to look at her. They lift each other up. They wave a flag. They rend their garments to make something which shall attract attention. But she passes away—black night comes and they are forgotten.

At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed. Strength fails them and they lay down their oars in the boat and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine, then, how well they understand the awful meaning of the term—"lost." As long as they had any strength left they felt they were not lost. As long as they could see a sail they felt there was yet hope. While there was

yet a moldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone and the water is gone—now strength has departed and the oar lies still.

They lie down to die by each other's side, mere skeletons—things that should have been dead days ago if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death-knell pealing forth that awful word, Lost! Lost! Lost! Now, in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, you, too, are condemned. Our Father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock and she is filling even to her bulwarks now. And pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking.

Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it has taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavor and in her you are striving to row with all your might to reach the shore. But your strength fails you. You say, "Oh, I cannot keep God's Law. The more I try to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb. But the higher I climb, the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill but now I seem to have ascended halfway up its steps—there it is, higher than the clouds—and I cannot discern the summit."

However, you gather up your strength, you try again. You row once more and at last unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of moldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved and you munch your dry biscuit. But at last that fails you and you find that neither Baptism, nor the Lord's Supper, nor any other outward rites can make you clean—for the leprosy lies deep within.

That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship—it is gone and there you are left at last, with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you— with the deep waters of a bottomless Hell beneath you. Fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing and you cry—"Lord save me, or I perish!"

Is that your condition this morning, my Friend, or has that ever been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save you. And you He will save and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title—"Lost"—who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost, as to all self-trust, all self-reliance and all self-hope.

I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty vengeance. For I said unto the Lord, "Have You set me as the target of all Your arrows? Am I a seal or a whale, that You have set a mark upon me? Have You sewed up my iniquities in a bag and sealed my transgressions with a seal? Will You never be gracious? Have You made me to be the center of all sorrow, the chosen one of Heaven to be cursed forever?"

Ah, fool that I was! I little knew, then, that those who have the curse in themselves are the men whom God will bless—those that have the sentence of death in ourselves—those that should not trust in ourselves, but in Him who died for us and rose again. Come, I will put the question once

again—can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you traveled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions and are you left in the midst of a sea of sand—a hopeless, arid waste? And do you look around you and see no helper? And do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the death bird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water bottle dry and does the bread fail you?

Have you consumed the last of your dry dates and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle? And are you now without hope, without trust in yourself—ready to lie down in despair? Listen! The Lord your God loves you! Jesus Christ has bought you with His blood! You are, you shall be His. He has been seeking you all this time and He has found you at last in the vast howling wilderness and now He will take you upon His shoulders and carry you to His house rejoicing! And the angels shall be glad over your salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom He came to save He will save. You, you lost ones—lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and Hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform His vow and accomplish His design.

I shall be very brief in concluding my discourse. But we have now to notice THE OBJECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST—He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that seek Him. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true. But it is a lie. Christ did come to save those that seek Him but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ unless the Lord Jesus first sought him. Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek Him, or else it would be left indeed, for so vile is human nature that although Heaven is offered and though Hell thunders in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man unconstrained by Sovereign Grace, who will run in the way of salvation and so escape from Hell and flee to Heaven.

It is all in vain for me to preach to you and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up. For man is so infatuated—his disease is one which causes such a madness of the brain—that he refuses the remedy and puts away from him the healing draught which alone can give him life from the dead. "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Let man alone—and with the Cross of Christ before him and all Hell behind him—he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord.

Hence Christ came first to seek men, and then to save them. Ah, what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you today on the tops of the mountains of pride and others of you in the deep glens of despair. Methinks I see the Savior coming forth to seek you. He finds you today in the green pastures of the sanctuary. He comes near to you and by these hands of mine He seeks to lay hold of you—but no sooner do you discern His approach—than you run far away into the wild desert of sin. Perhaps this evening you will be spending the remnant of the Sabbath in profaning God's Day. One of you at least I know who will be in the public house as soon as the evening sermon is over and most probably will go home very late.

If Christ intends to save you, He will go to you there. And while you are in that wild waste of sin, He will send some Providence after you and save you there. Away you fly, then, to the marshes of reformation and you say, "The Shepherd cannot overtake me. I shall be beyond His reach now, I have left off my drunkenness, I have given up my cursing." But He will come to you there and wade for you ankle deep in your own selfrighteousness. And then you will run away again and jump into the deep pit of despair and there you will say to yourself, "He can never find me here."

But I see Him coming with that crook of His—He enters the pit, takes you by the feet and casts you round His neck and carries you home rejoicing, saying, "I have found him at last! Wherever he wandered, I sought him and now I have found him." It is strange what strange places Christ finds some of His people! I knew one of Christ's sheep who was found out by his Master while committing robbery. I knew another who was found out by Christ while he was spiting his old mother by reading the Sunday newspaper and making fun of her.

Many have been found by Jesus Christ even in the midst of sin and vanity. I knew a preacher of the Gospel who was converted in a theater. He was listening to a play, an old-fashioned piece, that ended with a sailor's drinking a glass of gin before he was hung and he said, "Here's to the prosperity to the British Nation and the salvation of my immortal soul." Down went the curtain. And down went my friend, too, for he ran home with all his might. Those words, "The salvation of my immortal soul," had struck him to the quick. And he sought the Lord Jesus in his chamber. Many a day he sought Him and at last Jesus found him to his joy and confidence.

But for the most part Christ finds His people in His own house. But He finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions. And He softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride and takes them to Himself. But never would they come to Him unless He came to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back and he will tell you, "No, Sir. They will wander, but they never return." When you find a sheep that ever came back of himself, then you may hope to find a sinner that will come to Christ of himself. No. It must be Sovereign Grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home.

And when Christ seeks him He SAVES him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, He does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects—but He takes him by the hand of mercy and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, you lost Sinners, the Christ who seeks you today in the ministry and who has sought you many a day by His Providence will save you! He will first find you when you are emptied of self and then He will save you. When you are stripped He will bring forth the best robe and put it on you. When you are dying He will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned He will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, you hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you today and seeking, He will save you—save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them that are sanctified. May the Lord now bless these words to your consolation!

III. I shall not say more, as I intended to have done, lest I should weary you. Let me only remind you that the time is coming when that word "lost" will have a more frightful meaning to you than it has today. In a few more months, some of you, my Hearers, will hear the great bell of eternity tolling forth that awful word—lost, lost, lost! The great sepulchers of Hell will toll out your

doom—lost, lost, lost! And through the shades of eternal misery this shall forever assail your ear, that you are lost forever.

But if that bell is ringing in your ear today—that you are lost—oh, be of good cheer, it is a good thing to be so lost—it is a happy thing to be lost to self and lost to pride and lost to carnal hope! Christ will save you! Believe that. Look to Him as He hangs upon His Cross. One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to Him as He bleeds there in misery. He can, He will, save you. Believe on Him, for He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not must be damned. But whosoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus, he shall find everlasting life through His death and righteousness. May the Lord now gather in His lost sheep, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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Chapter 4

Luke 19,10 #204 - The Mission of the Son of Man -

THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN

(Particular Redemption)

NO. 204

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 11, 1858,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10.

How fond our Master was of the sweet title, the "Son of Man"! If He had chosen, He might always have spoken of Himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Prince of Peace. He has a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of Heaven, but He cares not to use them. To express His humility and let us see the lowliness of Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, He calls not Himself the Son of God, but He speaks of Himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from Heaven.

Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Savior. Let us never court great titles, nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that has the most of them is a worm still and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called Himself the Son of Man when He had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbles himself shall in due time be exalted.

Methinks, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much that He always desired to honor it. And since it is a high honor and, indeed, the greatest dignity of manhood that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, He desires to display this name, that He may, as it were, put rich stars upon the breast of manhood and put a crown upon its head. Son of Man—whenever He said that word He seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam's children.

Yet there is perhaps a more lovely thought still. Jesus Christ called Himself the Son of Man because He loved to be a man. It was a great stoop for Him to come from Heaven and to be Incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when He left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubim to mingle with the vulgar herd of His own creatures. But condescension though it were, He loved it. You will remember that when He became incarnate He did not become so in the dark. When He brings forth the only begotten into the world He said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

It was told in Heaven. It was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it. But all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Savior a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin's breast and lying in a manger. And ever afterwards and even now, He never blushed to confess that He was Man—never looked back upon His incarnation with the slightest regret. He always regarded it with a joyous recollection, thinking Himself thrice happy that He had ever become the Son of Man. All hail blessed Jesus! We know how much You love our race. We can well understand the greatness of Your mercy towards Your chosen ones, inasmuch as You are evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of Your bone and flesh of Your flesh and You are one of them, a Brother and a near kinsman!

Our text announces as a declaration of our Savior, that He, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning I shall simply divide my discourse thus—First, I shall lay it down as a self-evident Truth, that whatever was the intention of Christ in His coming into the world that intention most certainly shall never be frustrated. We shall then in the second place, look into the intention of Christ, as announced in the text, viz., "to seek and to save that which was lost." Then, in concluding, we shall derive a word of comfort and perhaps one of warning, from the intention of our Savior in coming into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost."

I. You are aware that there has been a very great discussion among all Christians about the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called general redemption, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ has shed His blood for every man and that the intention of Christ in His death was the salvation of men considered as a whole. They have, however, to overlook the fact that in this case Christ's intention would be frustrated in a measure.

There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ never was the salvation of all men. For if Christ had designed the salvation of all men, we hold that all men would have been saved. We believe that the intention of Christ's death is just equal to its effects, and therefore I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident Truth—that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world—that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

But I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be inconsistent with the very idea of God that He should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished. When I look at man I see him to be a creature so distracted with folly and so devoid of power that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish. I do not marvel that full often he stops short because he has not counted the cost. I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man's control that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition.

I see man to be the insect of a day, a mere speck upon the bay leaf of existence. And when I see him as a mere drop in the great sea of creation, I do not wonder that when he is ambitious he sometimes fashions in himself great designs which he is unable to accomplish because the

wheels of Providence and destiny will often run quite contrary to all the frolic of his will. But when I think of God whose name is, "I AM that I AM," the self-existent One, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty God. When I think of Him as filling immensity, having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom—I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of His ever failing in any of His intentions.

It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in His intention would not be God—but be a thing like ourselves—perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship. I cannot think of God as a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a Being who wills and it is accomplished. Who speaks and it is done. Who commands and it stands fast—forever—settled in Heaven. I cannot therefore imagine, since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that in His atonement and redemption His real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. If I were a Socinian and believed Jesus Christ to be a mere man, I could, of course, imagine that the result of His redemption would be uncertain. But believing that Jesus Christ was very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of His death shall remain unaccomplished.

But again, we have before us the fact, that up to now, all the works of God have accomplished their purpose. Whenever God has uttered by the lips of His servants a prophecy, it has surely come to pass. The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men. They had no intention whatever of serving God. They have run contrary to His Laws. But you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, His bit has been still in their mouth and His bridle in their jaws.

A great monarch has acted like leviathan in the sea—he has moved himself wherever he pleased. He has seemed mighty among the sons of men—all the rest of mankind were as minnows, while he was a huge leviathan. But we discover that God has been overruling his thoughts, that He has been in his council chamber, that the wildest speculations of his ambition have, after all, been but the fulfilling of Jehovah's stern decrees. Look abroad through all the nations of the earth and tell me—is there one prophecy of God that has failed? May He not still say, "Not one of them has lost her mate"?

Every Word of God has certainly been accomplished. The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us. But He that sits in the heavens did laugh at them. The Lord did have them in derision. Still He worked His own sovereign will. Let them do as they pleased, God was over them all, reigning and ruling evermore. If, then, God's purpose in Providence certainly never has been frustrated, am I to imagine that God's purpose in the glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void? If there are any of you who have arrived at such a contortion of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves. With you I could not argue—I should think you incapable of an argument. Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, has in all things done according to His own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment, that when He stoops Himself from the highest Heaven, to give His own heart's

blood for our redemption, He shall in that be foiled! No, though earth and Hell are against Him, every purpose of Jesus on the Cross shall be consummated and as the price was "finished," so shall the purchase be. As the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle.

But again, I invite you to stand at the foot of the Cross and take a view of Jesus Christ. And then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, Believer, place yourself in the garden of Gethsemane, hide yourself among those dark olives and listen to yonder Man who is in agony. Do you hear those groans? They are the groans of an incarnate God. Do you hear those sighs? They are the sighs of the Son of Man, God over all, blessed forever. Do you hear those strong cries and do you see those tears? They are the crying and the tears of Him who is equal with His Father, but who condescended to be a Man.

Rise, for He has risen, Judas has betrayed Him and taken Him away. Look on that ground. Do you see those clots of gore? It is the bloody sweat of the Man Christ Jesus. I beseech you, answer this question. Standing in the garden of Gethsemane, with those blood clots staining the white frost of that cold midnight, can you believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purpose? I challenge you, O Christian, whatever your doctrinal opinions, to say to me, "Yes," to such a question as that!

Can you imagine that a sweat of blood from the veins of incarnate Deity shall ever fall to the ground and fail? Why, Beloved, the Word of God which comes forth out of His mouth shall not return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases. How much more shall the Great WORD of God, which came forth from the loin of Deity, accomplish the purpose whereunto God has sent Him, and prosper in the thing for which it pleased God to ordain Him!?

But now come with me to the hall of judgment. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiers. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks, how they pluck His hair, how they buffet Him? Do you see the crown of thorns with its ruby drops of gore? Hark! Can you hear the cry of the multitude, as they say, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"? And will you now stand there and look at this Man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the lash of the scourge, covered with shame and spit and mockery and as this "Ecce Homo" is presented to you, will you believe that this, the incarnate Son of God, shall be made such a spectacle to men, to angels and to devils—and yet fail of His design?

Can you imagine that one lash of that whip shall have a fruitless aim? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting and yet endure what was far worse—a disappointment in the fulfillment of His intentions? No, God forbid! No! By Gethsemane and Gabbatha, we are pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by His death must certainly be accomplished.

Then again, see him hanging on His Cross. The nails have pierced His hands and feet and there in the broiling sun He hangs—He hangs to die. The mockery has not ceased. Still they put out the tongue and wag the head at Him. Still they taunt Him with, "If you are the Son of God come down from the Cross." And now His bodily pains increase, while His soul's anguish is terrible even unto death. Christian, can you believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain? Can you look at one of those precious drops as it trickles from His head or His hands or His feet and can you imagine that it shall fall to the ground and perish there? Trust the waters may fail from the sea, the sun may

grow dim with age, but I never can imagine that the value, the merit, the power of the blood of Jesus ever shall die out, or that its purpose shall be unaccomplished. It seems to me as clear as noonday, that the design of the Savior's death must certainly be fulfilled—be it what it may.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that His purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish His design of saving the lost, for He has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of His own design, for, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of power, for where there is omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength.

Nor again can the design be unaccomplished because it was unwise, for God's designs cannot be unwise, simply because they are of God—that is to say—they are of infinite wisdom. I cannot see anything in the Character of Christ, nor anything the wide world over, that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die and yet it should be said afterwards, "This Man died for a purpose which He never lived to see accomplished—the object of His death was only partially fulfilled. He saw of the travail of His soul, but He was not satisfied, for He did not redeem all whom He intended to redeem."

Now, some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men. It commends itself, they say, to the instincts of humanity. There is something in it full of joy and beauty. I admit there is. But beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might well admire in the theory of universal redemption but let me just tell you what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His Cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were damned before He died. If the doctrine is true, that He died for all men, He died for some that were in Hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were myriads there that had been cast away.

Once again, if it were Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed! We have His own evidence that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons who, according to that theory, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a thousand times more frightful than any of those horrors which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of Particular Redemption.

To think that my Savior died for men in Hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine—that He was the Substitute for the sons of men and that God having first punished the Substitute punished men again, seems to me to be in conflict with any idea of justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me, to be the most marvelous monstrosity that ever could have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, yes, to the god of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen demons. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the Just and Wise. If Christ has suffered in man's stead, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and save us from all unrighteousness.

II. I have thus stated the first thought that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now methinks everyone will anxiously listen and every ear will be attentive and the question will

arise from every heart, "WHAT THEN, WAS THE INTENTION OF THE SAVIOR'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Savior die—and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which He has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question— "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us two things—first, the subjects of the Savior's atonement, the lost. And, secondly, the purpose of it—He came to seek and save.

I must now endeavor to pick out the objects of the Savior's atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Some of you may turn your heads away at once and conclude that up to now you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are very good sort of people. You never did much that was wrong—perhaps a little now and then. But nothing particular ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the kingdom of Heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbors and if you are not saved, God help other people! If you do not go to Heaven, who will?

You are trusting in your own good works and believing you are righteous. Now let us decide your case at once. Since you are ashamed to put yourselves among those who are lost, I have no Christ to preach to you till you are ready to come and confess that you are lost. For Christ himself tells us that He came, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And inasmuch as you belong to the righteous and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent, you may turn upon your heel and go. In the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own self-righteousness.

But I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, Sir, I know I am guilty, but still I am persuaded that by attention to the Law of God, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. I intend henceforward to reform and I believe that by a consistent course of attention to religious ordinances and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past." Ah, my Friend, up to now you give me no hope that you have any portion in the death of Christ. Christ came not to die for men who can save themselves without Him. If you think you can save yourself remember the door of mercy is shut in your face.

Christ came to bring robes from Heaven, but not for you who can spin for yourselves. He came to bring bread for the hungry, but He will give none of it to you who can sow and reap and make bread for yourselves. Christ helps the helpless, but they who can help themselves and have sufficient of their own strength and merit to carry them to Heaven may fight their way there alone, if they can—they shall have no help from Him. Whom, then, did Christ die to save? It is said, He came to save "that which was lost."

Now, you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost. And then I will conclude by noticing the term as it is used in the proper sense. We may affirm that Christ died for the lost. We know that all men are lost in Adam—as soon as we are born into this world, we are lost. When the tiny boat of the infant is launched upon the river of life it is lost. Unless Sovereign Grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy and carry it to Heaven or save it afterwards, when it shall have grown up—that infant is lost. "Behold," says David, "I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. In sin did my mother conceive me." "In Adam all die." The Fall of Adam was the fall of the human race. Then you and I and all of us fell down.

Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out like weeds immediately after the shower of rain—speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest and we grow up to sin and so we become lost by practice. But mark, a man may be lost in Adam and lost by practice and yet be saved by Christ. Christ is able to save you—though you are twice lost—His salvation is able to redeem you from death.

Then there are some who go further still. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller and some become lost to the Church. After having been trained up religiously in our midst, they turn aside—they give up all outward regard to the worship of God. The ministry of the Gospel is neglected, the house of prayer is forsaken and the Church tolls its bell and says of such an one, "He is lost to the Church." Some go further still. They are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in the midst of us the harlot and the drunkard, who, like the leper in the camp of Israel, have to be put away lest the contagion should spread. And those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from them lest the evil should spread in the midst of the flock.

Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save and whom He will save. But a man may be lost to society and may be lost everlastingly. It is no proof that Christ will save him, because he is thus lost—while at the same time it is no proof that He will not save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this. Again, the man may go further and be lost to the family. We have known those who have become so vile that even after society has shut them out a parent has been obliged to shut then out, too. That must be a Hell of sin, indeed, which can make a father say to his son, "My Son, you shall not want bread while I have any, but I must forbid you my house, for your brothers and sisters cannot endure your society. I feel you would destroy their souls if I should allow you to associate with them." Now, a man may be lost thus to his own family and yet Sovereign Grace will save him. But, mark, a man may be lost to his family and yet not be saved. Yes, that may be the increase of his condemnation, that he sinned against a mother's prayers and against a father's exhortations.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are lost to themselves. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm—the ship leaks and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining. They seek to keep down the devouring element. They still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved. They give it up for lost and leap into the boats.

The boats are beating for many a day, full of men who have but little food to eat. "They are lost," we say, "lost out at sea." But they do not think so. They still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship in the horizon. They strain their eyes to look at her. They lift each other up. They wave a flag. They rend their garments to make something which shall attract attention. But she passes away—black night comes and they are forgotten.

At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed. Strength fails them and they lay down their oars in the boat and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine, then, how well they understand the awful meaning of the term—"lost." As long as they had any strength left they felt they were not lost. As long as they could see a sail they felt there was yet hope. While there was

yet a moldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone and the water is gone—now strength has departed and the oar lies still.

They lie down to die by each other's side, mere skeletons—things that should have been dead days ago if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death-knell pealing forth that awful word, Lost! Lost! Lost! Now, in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, you, too, are condemned. Our Father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock and she is filling even to her bulwarks now. And pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking.

Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it has taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavor and in her you are striving to row with all your might to reach the shore. But your strength fails you. You say, "Oh, I cannot keep God's Law. The more I try to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb. But the higher I climb, the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill but now I seem to have ascended half-way up its steps—there it is, higher than the clouds— and I cannot discern the summit."

However, you gather up your strength, you try again. You row once more and at last unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of moldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved and you munch your dry biscuit. But at last that fails you and you find that neither Baptism, nor the Lord's Supper, nor any other outward rites can make you clean—for the leprosy lies deep within.

That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship—it is gone and there you are left at last, with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you—with the deep waters of a bottomless Hell beneath you. Fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing and you cry—"Lord save me, or I perish!"

Is that your condition this morning, my Friend, or has that ever been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save you. And you He will save and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title—"Lost"—who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost, as to all self-trust, all self-reliance and all self-hope.

I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of Almighty vengeance. For I said unto the Lord, "Have You set me as the target of all Your arrows? Am I a seal or a whale, that You have set a mark upon me? Have You sewed up my iniquities in a bag and sealed my transgressions with a seal? Will You never be gracious? Have You made me to be the center of all sorrow, the chosen one of Heaven to be cursed forever?"

Ah, fool that I was! I little knew, then, that those who have the curse in themselves are the men whom God will bless—those that have the sentence of death in ourselves—those that should not trust in ourselves, but in Him who died for us and rose again. Come, I will put the question once

again—can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you traveled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions and are you left in the midst of a sea of sand—a hopeless, arid waste? And do you look around you and see no helper? And do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the death bird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water bottle dry and does the bread fail you?

Have you consumed the last of your dry dates and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle? And are you now without hope, without trust in yourself—ready to lie down in despair? Listen! The Lord your God loves you! Jesus Christ has bought you with His blood! You are, you shall be His. He has been seeking you all this time and He has found you at last in the vast howling wilderness and now He will take you upon His shoulders and carry you to His house rejoicing! And the angels shall be glad over your salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom He came to save He will save. You, you lost ones—lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and Hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform His vow and accomplish His design.

I shall be very brief in concluding my discourse. But we have now to notice THE OBJECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST—He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that seek Him. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true. But it is a lie. Christ did come to save those that seek Him but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ unless the Lord Jesus first sought him. Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek Him, or else it would be left indeed, for so vile is human nature that although Heaven is offered and though Hell thunders in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man unconstrained by Sovereign Grace, who will run in the way of salvation and so escape from Hell and flee to Heaven.

It is all in vain for me to preach to you and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up. For man is so infatuated—his disease is one which causes such a madness of the brain—that he refuses the remedy and puts away from him the healing draught which alone can give him life from the dead. "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Let man alone—and with the Cross of Christ before him and all Hell behind him—he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord.

Hence Christ came first to seek men, and then to save them. Ah, what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you today on the tops of the mountains of pride and others of you in the deep glens of despair. Methinks I see the Savior coming forth to seek you. He finds you today in the green pastures of the sanctuary. He comes near to you and by these hands of mine He seeks to lay hold of you—but no sooner do you discern His approach—than you run far away into the wild desert of sin. Perhaps this evening you will be spending the remnant of the Sabbath in profaning God's Day. One of you at least I know who will be in the public house as soon as the evening sermon is over and most probably will go home very late.

If Christ intends to save you, He will go to you there. And while you are in that wild waste of sin, He will send some Providence after you and save you there. Away you fly, then, to the marshes of reformation and you say, "The Shepherd cannot overtake me. I shall be beyond His reach now, I have left off my drunkenness, I have given up my cursing." But He will come to you there and wade for you ankle deep in your own self-righteousness. And then you will run away again and jump into the deep pit of despair and there you will say to yourself, "He can never find me here." But I see Him coming with that crook of His—He enters the pit, takes you by the feet and casts you round His neck and carries you home rejoicing, saying, "I have found him at last! Wherever he wandered, I sought him and now I have found him." It is strange what strange places Christ finds some of His people! I knew one of Christ's sheep who was found out by his Master while committing robbery. I knew another who was found out by Christ while he was spiting his old mother by reading the Sunday newspaper and making fun of her.

Many have been found by Jesus Christ even in the midst of sin and vanity. I knew a preacher of the Gospel who was converted in a theater. He was listening to a play, an old-fashioned piece, that ended with a sailor's drinking a glass of gin before he was hung and he said, "Here's to the prosperity to the British Nation and the salvation of my immortal soul." Down went the curtain. And down went my friend, too, for he ran home with all his might. Those words, "The salvation of my immortal soul," had struck him to the quick. And he sought the Lord Jesus in his chamber. Many a day he sought Him and at last Jesus found him to his joy and confidence.

But for the most part Christ finds His people in His own house. But He finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions. And He softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride and takes them to Himself. But never would they come to Him unless He came to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back and he will tell you, "No, Sir. They will wander, but they never return." When you find a sheep that ever came back of himself, then you may hope to find a sinner that will come to Christ of himself. No. It must be Sovereign Grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home.

And when Christ seeks him He SAVES him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, He does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects—but He takes him by the hand of mercy and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, you lost Sinners, the Christ who seeks you today in the ministry and who has sought you many a day by His Providence will save you! He will first find you when you are emptied of self and then He will save you. When you are stripped He will bring forth the best robe and put it on you.

When you are dying He will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned He will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, you hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you today and seeking, He will save you—save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them that are sanctified. May the Lord now bless these words to your consolation!

III. I shall not say more, as I intended to have done, lest I should weary you. Let me only remind you that the time is coming when that word "lost" will have a more frightful meaning to you than it has today. In a few more months, some of you, my Hearers, will hear the great bell of eternity

tolling forth that awful word—lost, lost, lost! The great sepulchers of Hell will toll out your doom—lost, lost, lost! And through the shades of eternal misery this shall forever assail your ear, that you are lost forever.

But if that bell is ringing in your ear today—that you are lost—oh, be of good cheer, it is a good thing to be so lost—it is a happy thing to be lost to self and lost to pride and lost to carnal hope! Christ will save you! Believe that. Look to Him as He hangs upon His Cross. One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to Him as He bleeds there in misery. He can, He will, save you. Believe on Him, for He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not must be damned. But whosoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus, he shall find everlasting life through His death and righteousness. May the Lord now gather in His lost sheep, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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Chapter 5

Luke 19,10 #2756 - Saving the Lost

SAVING THE LOST

NO. 2756

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON, LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 8, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1879.

"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10.

OUR Lord's mission upon earth was a very gracious one. It had a narrow side to it, for He came only as a Minister—not as a Savior, mark you, but as Minister—to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He was, as the Apostle Paul reminds us, "a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God." And He did not traverse any other country but Palestine, in order to preach the Gospel to the people, but He kept Himself to the seed of Abraham.

Yet there was abundant room for one personal ministry within that realm alone. If a Christian worker were to say that he would confine his labors to London, he certainly need not think that he would have a restricted range! And our Savior's personal preaching in Palestine gave Him more work than any one man could accomplish. But, even in that restricted sense, it is remarkable that He should have said to the woman of Canaan, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The lost sheep were the peculiar desire of His heart—not so much Israel, as "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His eye was especially fixed upon them, His Grace sought out the objects most needing it. His mercy hungered after human misery in order that He might relieve it so that there were always uppermost in His mind, thoughts of pity and love towards the sons of men.

At this present moment, under the Gospel dispensation, there is no division between Israel and the Gentile. I do not care whether I am an Israelite or not, after the flesh, because in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile. That is all abolished and all the fuss that some people make about whether we are descended from the Jews is nonsense and nothing better! If it is so, it does not matter in the least. For now "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free—but Christ is all and in all." The middle wall of partition has been taken down once and for all and, now, all over the world, this Truth of God stands in reference not to this nation, or to that, alone, but to the whole human race, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Still do His eyes, with eagle keenness, spy out the

lost. Still do those eyes, with dove-like tenderness, weep for

Volume 47 1the lost! Still does the eternal Savior live that He may seek and save that which was lost!

If you were never lost, you have no part or lot in His work of salvation. But if you are lost, and know it, this is the very link which unites you to the Savior! He has come to seek and to save just such as you are and I hope, in the observations I am about to make, that I shall be able to show that He came to save you!

I. I shall speak concerning OUR LORD'S MISSION. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Notice, first, what a gracious mission it was! It was a mission of pure mercy and indescribable love. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to seek His own honor, but to seek and to save the lost. Not to get anything for Himself, but to give everything to those who are lost. His mission is one of undeserved goodness, on His part, towards those who have treated Him evilly and who deserve very different treatment at His hands. There was no law except His own love to compel Christ to come to save sinners. They had no claim upon Him. When He resolved to come, it was an act of matchless Grace. If He had not chosen to come, He would still have been the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, enshrined in everlasting Glory though everyone of us had perished! His coming was Infinite goodness, returning good for evil, coming down to our lost estate and determining, by superabundant affection, to save us from it! Our Savior is embodied Grace, Incarnate Love and His mission is Grace itself. Let us never forget that He came to save the lost—not to save the good and the excellent.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, Christ's eyes look in the opposite direction to ours. We usually look for some goodness on the part of men before we help them, but He looks to their sin, degradation and need. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil. He justifies those who are not, in themselves, just—while we were dead in trespasses and sins, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Grace, pure Grace, abounds in Him and is blessedly manifested in His mission of saving the lost.

Further, while that mission is a very gracious one, I cal1 your attention to the fact that it is also a great one. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost and there are plenty of them. It is no small charge that Christ has taken up when He speaks of saving the lost. What a mass of our fellow countrymen are lost! I mean, in the common use of the term, "the lost classes" that are morally gone astray and are, by universal consent, put down among the lost. Look at whole nations of mankind that are sunk up to their eyelids in infamous transgression, lost to every sense of shame and decency. Christ, however, has come to save just such as they are and, to tell the truth, the difference between us and them, by nature, is not more than skin deep! We are a little better washed on the outside than they are, but the inside of the cup and platter of fallen humanity is pretty much alike in all men. We may have been better taught. We may have been more restrained than they have been, but a viper is still a viper wherever he may live and man is, in every case, a lost man, a depraved and sinful creature. To my mind, it seems a wondrous charge for Christ to undertake—to save "the lost" without any qualification added to the word—just "the lost."

What a mission Christianity had when it first came, for instance, into Rome! When Christianity first came there it was inconceivably vile. Its emperors were madmen! I think I cannot truthfully say less of such monsters as Nero, Tiberius and Caligula, whose power seemed all to be bent to supply themselves with the means for the indulgence of the most abandoned forms of vice. The city of Rome was full of statues, the larger part of which, thank God, have been utterly destroyed—and I often wish the rest had been, for many of them are polluting and depraving even to look upon. The city was full of idols as well as of art and the principal images were not the more respectable ones, like Jupiter and Mercury, but Venus and Bacchus and other abominations from the filthy crowd of Olympus. The rich indulged themselves in every luxury. Women, while their maids waited upon them, and dressed them, practiced upon their female slaves cruelty of such a kind that one would think that everything feminine had gone out of them. Slaves were tortured and put to death— and nothing was ever said about such common crimes. In the amphitheatre, into which the multitudes crowded, scores and even hundreds of gladiators died in a single day—slaying each other in mutual conflict to make a Roman holiday! The nation was full of corruption, bribery, filthiness. A few characters shone out brightly, the more renowned because they were so few, but the land, as a whole, was such that, if Vesuvius had belched forth a torrent of fire high enough to set all Italy in a blaze, and an earthquake had opened its mouth and swallowed it all up, there would have been as much justification for its destruction as for that of Sodom and Gomorrah of old!

But Christianity came into Rome in the form of a poor fisherman and a tent-maker, and others like them. And they began to say, "We must love each other. You who are rich must count it a privilege to help the poor. We must all fear and serve the one true God, for there is but one. And God has made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth. You are not to treat men with cruelty. You are not to have these bloody games. You are not to indulge these licentious propensities. The Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, has died to save us from sin and all its consequences." It was a very still small voice that was heard in Rome at first—and if it had not been for the supernatural power of God, it would speedily have been silenced! But its influence soon began to spread, for some of the rich men in the city and some of the soldiers on guard in Caesar's palace, and many of the poor slaves embraced the new religion and everywhere they were renowned for kindness, gentleness, purity and love.

Then wicked men said, "We will put this new religion down," and horrible persecutions followed. But, notwithstanding all that the Christians suffered, Rome became leavened with the influence of Christianity. Byand-by, slavery passed away, cruelties were no longer indulged, the amphitheatre was abolished and many of the idol gods were broken in pieces. The one invisible God was worshipped and the world rose up like one that has been in an awful swoon, and dreamed dreadful things—and she looked into the mirror and saw her face as though she had been born-again! Christ had come to seek and to save lost society and He did it in a marvelous way, as He can always do it and He will continue to do it, for this is the great errand of my Master, that wherever men are sunken in sin and vice—wherever they are immersed in crime, or satisfied with their self-righteousness—He has come to save them from it!

Mark, also, that my Master's mission, while it is a gracious one and a great one, is a very complete one. He comes to seek, that is, to find, the lost. And coming into contact with lost humanity, He does not leave it lost, for He saves those whom He seeks.

And what a condescending way of saving He has, for the text says, "The Son of Man has come." He was no "Son of Man" once—He was and always remains the eternal Son of God! But He deigned to take upon Him this poor Nature of ours. He became a Man like ourselves—a condescension so marvelous that though we hear of it now with little astonishment, yet, if we sat down to think it over, it would remain an unexplained mystery to bewilder us with its marvels of matchless Grace! Yes, the Son of God became the Son of Man! As such, He lived. As such, He bled away His life upon the Cross that He might redeem us! He has come as the Son of Man that He might lift us up to be the sons of God! And, blessed be His name, the deed is done and, by His Spirit's power, its glorious results are still bringing untold blessings to all who trust Him!

Just once more, what a practical aim our Savior had in coming here! Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to propound a philosophy. He did not come to explode ancient errors. He did not come to keep abreast of the times. He did not come to do the pretty things that many ministers are trying to do nowadays. He did not come to be rhetorical. He did not come to be popular. He did not come that He might gain the esteem of the multitude. He came to seek and to save the lost! Would God that His Church would keep to the same kind of work! But His Church seems to me to act in a great measure as if she were in the world simply to show off her pretty self with all her fineries—to play her grand music and tickle the ears of people with a Sunday concert and I know not what of floral show to increase the attraction of it. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and what are we who call ourselves His disciples, doing? Many of us are doing a thousand other things than this one great thing which alone is worthy of the service of the man who calls himself a Christian and who, therefore, ought to be one who is like Christ. He came to seek and to save the lost. Brothers and Sisters, try to get at this work as closely as you can. Whatever else you can or cannot do, do seek to be the means of saving souls! Whatever you can do, that is fine and grand and that will bring you into esteem among your fellow men, do try to save poor lost sinners, even though they should be among the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor! Do try to do what you are called to do in your Master's name, for, by the power of His matchless Gospel, you, also, can seek the lost and bring them to Him to save them!

Thus much about our Master's mission.

II. Now I want, in the second place, to give a MESSAGE TO THE LOST ONES FROM MY TEXT.

I do not know where you lost ones are, but here, somewhere, are some of you who know yourselves to be lost. I am not talking to these other people, but you and I will have a little conversation between ourselves.

And, first, I ask you to think what an interest is excited about you. You are lost and it seems that earth and Heaven, too, are concerned about your being lost, for the Son of Man who is also the Son of God blends Heaven and earth in one in being concerned about you! God's Church is interested in your salvation. Many Christians are praying for you and I am trying to speak out the common love of Christians to you. Because you are lost, we long that you may be saved! Suppose there is a little child in the family—not a very pretty child, not always quite clean, nothing very much to look at in anybody's eyes except her mother's. They are seven or eight in the family and the parents have not much time to waste in admiration of any one of them when they have to earn bread for so many. But, just now, little Mary is the principal object of thought in the family. Everybody's heart is taken up with Mary. There is nobody in the house who is not thinking of

Mary—what is the reason? Why, Mary went out this morning, to go on an errand, and it is now evening and she has not come home! And they have been round to the police station, but they cannot find her. Mary is lost, so there is more thought of her than about Jane, or Hannah, or John, or Thomas, though, it may be, they are older and better children. But Mary, just now, is uppermost with everybody because Mary is lost!

It is so with regard to you, my dear Friend. You are in the uppermost thought of Christ just now, and you are in our uppermost thoughts, too, because you are lost. I do not want you to feel at all elated at being the subject of this interest, because it is not so much you, you know, or anything about you except the one fact that you are lost, which makes us so much interested in you!

Presently there is such joy, such kissing and hugging, such delight, such singing because Mary is found. Perhaps you step in and look at Mary—she is just as commonplace a little baby as ever sat on a mother's knee, but still, you see, she had been lost and she has been found and, therefore, they are rejoicing over her with great joy. All the prominence that Mary gets is not due to her goodness, but to the fact of the love that cannot bear that she should be lost. And it is so with you, my dear Friend. We would move Heaven and earth about you if we could! We would suspend the angels' songs and bid them lean upon their harps and look on, while all Heaven and earth, in the Person of the WellBeloved, are seeking and saving that which is lost! So I bid you remember what interest is excited about you!

Next, notice what power and what wisdom are engaged concerning you—you poor lost body over there! The Son of Man has come to seek and to save you! It is not that the preacher is laboring to save the lost, but, you see, the pearly gates are swinging back on their golden hinges— the King's Palace gates are opening and there is One passing through whose coming to the earth astounds cherubim and seraphim! It is He who descends, disrobing Himself as He comes down, hanging up His royal rings like new stars, doffing His azure mantle and stretching it across the sky, for, as George Herbert quaintly says, He has new clothes a-making down below! He comes here, to this poor earth, and you see Him as a babe at Bethlehem and a boy at Nazareth. Being here, He stoops continually lower and lower till He reaches the deepest depths of all upon the Cross of Calvary. And, all the while He goes about His daily task hunting for such as you! And what He literally did when He was here, He is still doing by the Divine Spirit—He is stall watching, still waiting, still seeking, still going round the earth hunting after the los!

It ought to greatly encourage you who are lost when you remember that there is such an One as the Lord Jesus Christ who has come after you. A child, lost in the woods, sits down and cries. The night is coming on, she is very weary and her sad little heart has only one comfort. "Father will begin to hunt after me, directly. He comes home and when mother tells him that his little girl is lost, he will search for me all night long. Father knows the forest trails and knows where I have been known to stray. Father will find me before the morning, so I will lay me down and sleep." And, dear lost one, you may have even more confidence that the Savior will search for you! Do not give up in despair because Jesus seems so long in coming to find you. He has piercing eyes to see you and swift feet to leap o'er mountains after you—and a ready hand to grasp you and strong shoulders on which to bear His wandering sheep home to the fold above. There is hope for you, lost one, for the Son of Man has come, bringing all His Godhead with Him and, in the Infinity of His power, and wisdom and love, He is seeking to save just such sinners as you!

I want you, however, to notice another thing—you lost one, I mean, for you and I are supposed to be talking together tonight. Do you see what trouble you have caused? The little child is troubled at being lost, but think what trouble there is at home on her account! Last Wednesday morning there came into my study a Brother-minister and I saw at once that he was in terrible trouble, He had come to see me about something else, but I could not help saying to him, "You have some great sorrow on your heart, have you not?" He answered, "Yes, I have. I lost my wife a year and a half ago, and that was a great grief to me, but I have a trial now which seems to cut me to the heart almost more than that bereavement did." "What is that?" I asked, and he replied, "Last Sabbath morning, when I went to preach, I thought my boy had come into the Chapel with me, but, after the service, I could not find him. I went home, but he did not come in to dinner, and I could not get any tidings of him anywhere. I had to preach, in the evening, with a heavy heart, for I still could not find him, and I spent the greater part of the night with others searching everywhere for him. "And now," he said, "it is Wednesday and I have not found him, nor have I heard a word concerning him."

Oh, you should have seen how sad he looked! "It is my eldest boy," he said, "and he is lost." Up to this present moment, I believe that he has not heard anything of him. He would compass the whole land to find him, I know, but he does not know where to look for him. The boy is lost and, possibly, he does not know what trouble he is giving his father and all his friends. If he did, he would very soon be home. Ah, and sinners give great trouble because they are lost. You have heard what trouble sinners gave to the Lord Jesus Christ. That death of His upon the Cross was part of the trouble that fell upon His great heart because we will sin—because we will be lost—because we will not turn to Him and live. What trouble many of you sinners give to your friends on earth—and what trouble you gave to the Lord Jesus Christ! It threw Him into a bloody sweat even to think of you as lost and to take your place and bear the penalty of your guilt.

There is one other reflection, which will not, I hope, wipe out this one. That is, what joy you would give if you were found! Oh, what clapping of hands there would be and what singing of songs of thanksgiving in your home, if you have a pious mother or a godly father! Sometimes, members of this Church come to speak with me and I know, by their manner, that there is something very joyful that they have to tell me. They do not laugh—they seem very quiet about their joy but there is a deep undercurrent of gladness. One said to me, lately, "God has been very gracious to me, for both my son and my daughter have just found the Savior." You know that fathers and mothers, when they are right-hearted, are much more glad about such good news as this than they are when they say, "My son has gained a fortune," or, "My daughter has married into a rich family." Oh, yes, to be able to say they are saved is the best thing that can possibly be said about them! I feel such gladness as I can never express when I think of my own dear sons, whom God has brought to the feet of Jesus and called to preach the Gospel which their father loves! O you poor sad sinners, you would be the cause of great joy on earth if you came to Christ—and you would make Christ Himself glad, too! That is the greatest wonder of all—that He who sits upon the Throne of God in ineffable bliss, can have an increase to His joy if you are saved! Yet we know that it is so, for "there is joy"—not only among the angels—but Christ said, "there is joy in the Presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." That is to say, it is God Himself who has the joy, and Christ who rejoices over one sinner that repents!

That is my special word with you, poor lost sinners. May God bless it to you and may you speedily be found by the seeking Savior!

III. Now I come to the closing portion of my discourse which is to be a WORD TO OURSELVES.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, the workers in this Church, I want to speak to you and to myself. And what I want to say is just this—if Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, has come to seek and to save that which was lost, what honorable work is yours and mine when we try to be the means of saving souls! The Grand Worthy Chief Master of the Confraternity of Soul-Sinners is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Those who belong to that blessed company have Jesus Christ as their Head. I always feel that it is a high honor to be a minister of the Gospel when I remember what the old Puritan said. He said that the Lord God had only one Son, and He made a Minister of Him—what could He do better with Him? So, today there is no higher rank on earth than that of a winner of souls! Be you in whatever position in life you may, if you are seeking to bring eternal salvation to men, you have far higher employment than falls to the lot of the mightiest of earth's kings and princes!

Next, think how thorough your efforts ought to be in this work. You ought to go after souls, to seek them, as the Son of Man came to seek them. If they will not come into the place where you usually speak, go and speak to them where they are. If you have not got the children you want to have in your class in the Sunday school, go and seek to bring them in and then, when you have sought them and gathered them around you, do not be satisfied till they are saved! It is a great mercy to have the House of Prayer filled with people listening to the Gospel. I am always glad to see such a sight, but oh, if you hearers are not saved, what is the good of your coming here? If my Master will not give me your souls for my hire, I can scarcely thank Him for allowing me to preach to you, for I am doing you harm rather than good, being "the savor of death unto death," rather than "of life unto life," if you hear the Word, but are not saved by it! O dear unsaved souls, we can never be satisfied concerning you until you are truly converted to God! Dear Christian workers, do not rest until those who listen to the Gospel message believe it and so find eternal salvation!

Notice next how naturally some of you ought to take to the work of soulwinning. When a child is lost, who should seek it? Why, its mother and father, of course! They are sure to do so. Well, do you seek the souls of your own children? Do you pray for them? Do you try, by your teaching, and by your example, to bring them to Christ? If you do not, shame on you that you bear the Christian name! I hope all of you who are Christian parents are seeking the salvation of your own children. The next person to go in search of a lost child, after its parents, I should think, is its brother. A lad hears that his dear little sister is lost. I see the hot tears in the boy's eyes as he says, "Mother, I will go anywhere, I will go everywhere if I can but find her." Well, now, you who are brothers, you who are related to one another—and you are all brothers of the one great human family—you all ought, for that very reason, to be concerned about finding these lost ones! But if there is one member of the family who is affected the most by the loss of the child, it is, probably, the older sister who was especially charged to take care of it. Or if the big brother is responsible, because the child was entrusted to his charge, he will not be able to bear himself! He will cry, "Oh, that I should have lost her!—that I should be the cause of her wandering away!" He will not rest at night, I am sure, unless he has found her.

Some of us are very specially put in charge of souls. You are teachers. You are evangelists. You are ministers and I am, as I know full well. What if I should ever be the cause of the loss of any one of you? I would not have it so. God grant that it may never be, that any word of mine, spoken in a

thoughtless manner, or anything that I might say too coldly, or with too much levity, should ever lead an immortal spirit to turn away from hope and from the Lord Jesus Christ! It would be a dreadful thing if that were to happen—and if it ever has, let us henceforth be among the first to seek to find those who have gone astray.

I will tell you, too, who would be sure to look after a lost child, and that is a child who was once lost and who has been found. It may have happened years ago, but the lad says to his mother, "I know what it is to be lost, for I was once lost in the woods. Let me go and find the little one, as somebody came and found me." You who know the smart of sin, the sorrow that sin brings, will be among the very first to try to find the lost ones. I am sure you will, so I scarcely need say a word to urge you to this holy service.

Then there are those who are acquainted with the ground where the lost ones are—they are sure to go seek them. A child lost in our London streets will probably be found again, but a child lost in the backwoods of America may never be discovered until its bones are found. We who know the dangers of the road—that roaring lion, those pitfalls and traps—we cannot but feel that we must be among the first to go to seek the lost!—

"Oh, come, let as go and find them! In the paths of death they roam. At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say, 'I have brought some lost one home.'"

And we may, with great hopefulness, go about the work of seeking the lost because there is One with us, in the seeking party, who is sure to find them. "Come," we say to one another, "let us gather together, and let us go and search the woods to find the lost one." But we know so little about the work and we are so weak and feeble that we soon become dispirited. But here comes the One who is going to lead the search party! You know Him! Look at His pierced hands and feet and brow. Mark that ensign of the Son of Man, the spear gash in His side. Look at His dear face! Was there ever on any other countenance, such beauty of compassionate love? He comes forward, girt with His golden belt, with His eyes brighter than flames of fire, and He says, "I will lead the search. You take your orders from Me. I will tell you where to go and I will go with you. And so My lost ones shall all be found."

Dear Master, we are only too glad to go on such an errand! You shall not have to tell us twice and if any of us are inclined to linger, we think we see You lift Your pierced hand and say, "Who will go for Me? And whom shall I send?" And many of us, rising in our seats, would gladly raise our hand and dedicate ourselves from this very moment to this blessed service, each one of us saying, "Here am I Lord! Send me."

Go thus, Brothers and Sisters, in the Holy Spirit's might, and in your Savior's name! And may He enable you to bring home, with rejoicing, many of the lost ones—and to Him shall be all the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Matthew 21:23-46. Verse 23. And when He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching and said, By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority? Jesus knew that these men came to Him for no good purpose, and that they were only trying to trip Him up in His speech. He was always willing to

teach when men were willing to learn, but He did not care to cast His pearls before swine. Therefore, mark the holy caution, the sacred ingenuity with which our Lord replied to these men.

24-27. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, where was it from? From Heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we say, From Heaven, He will say unto us, Why did you not, then, believe him? But if we say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a Prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And He said unto them, Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. He carried the war into the enemy's camp. He answered His accusers by asking them a question which they could not answer in either way without condemning themselves!

28-32. But what do you think? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir: and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said unto Him, The first. Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and you, when you had seen it, repented not afterward, that you might believe him. Those poor fallen women and degraded tax gatherers practically said, by their conduct, "We will not serve the Lord." Their past evil life had been a deliberate rejection of the authority of God and yet, when John the Baptist came, they repented and they believed! Each of them had said, like the elder son, "I will not," yet they did! But as for these chief priests and elders, who all their lives had been outwardly serving the Lord and saying, "We will go and work in God's vineyard," when John came and pointed them to God's own Son, they would not accept Him.

They had, just now, by refusing to tell whether the Lord's messenger was from Heaven or of men, again rejected Him and proved that they had not repented. They did not believe John—they had themselves confessed that it was so—and, therefore, out of their own mouths they were condemned! I wonder whether there is any lesson in this parable to some who are here. I should not be surprised if there is. I hope that there are some among you who up to now have said, "I will not go," who will repent and go and serve your God! And, on the other hand, it is to be feared that there may be some here who have always been saying, "I go, Sir," who nevertheless have not gone and, perhaps, never will go—but will remain to the last, disobedient to the command of God. The Lord grant that it may not be so!

33-41. Hear another parable. There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do

unto those husbandmen? They said unto Him, he will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall reader him the fruits in their seasons. You see at once how this parable related to the leaders of the Jewish people! From generation to generation, they scorned the Prophets of God, persecuted them and put them to death. And when our Lord Himself appeared, though His Glory might easily have been seen by them, yet they cast Him out from among them and put Him to death!

Yet, beloved Friends, we must never regard the Scriptures as referring only to strangers and people of past ages! We must also look to see what bearing they have upon ourselves. The rejection of God's Prophets is the sin of our common humanity. And the murder of the Son of God was the crime, not of the Jews only, but of the whole human race. We, too, have a share in it, for we have rejected the Son of the Highest. "But we were not there," you say. No, and yet we may have repeated that terrible tragedy in our own lives. God has sent you many messengers and if you remain, at this moment, unconverted, you have not treated them well, otherwise you would have yielded your heart to God. Some of them you have rejected by your neglect and others have been the subject of your ridicule and contempt. Against some you have reacted violently, for your conscience has been touched and you have had to do violence to conscience in order to reject their message!

Last of all, the Son of God Himself has come to you in the preaching of the Gospel. You have heard of His death and of His atoning Sacrifice, but you have rejected them and, in acting thus, you have done, as far as you could, the same as they did who crucified the Savior! You still refuse to have Him for your Savior. You disown Him as your King. You strive against His righteous sway. You tell me that you do not. Well, then, you have yielded to Him and you are saved. But if that is not the case, you still remain such an adversary of God that you reject His Son! Take care lest of you, also, that prophecy should become true—He will miserably destroy those wicked men and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."
42. Jesus said unto them, Did you never read in the Scriptures? What a question this was for our Lord to put to men who professed to have the whole of the Scriptures at their fingertips and to be the only qualified interpreters of them! "Did you never read in the Scriptures?"

42, 43. The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the chief cornerstone: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And, at this day, we Gentiles enjoy the privileges of the Gospel, while poor Israel is scattered to the four winds of Heaven! But He that spared not the natural olive, will not spare the engrafted branches if we are found unfruitful. God takes the Gospel away from one nation and gives it to another. But if it is not accepted by the other one and if He has not all the Glory of it ascribed to Him, He will take it away from that nation, too! He may deal thus with us—if England becomes and remains a drunken nation, a cruel nation, a proud nation, an unbelieving nation, a superstitious nation and brings forth the evil fruits of the vine of Sodom—we may not expect that God will always continue His Kingdom among us! He will say to us, as Christ said to these chief priests and elders, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

44. And whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken. If you stumble over Christ, the chief Cornerstone of God's building, you will be broken in pieces! If you reject Him, you shall suffer

serious loss!

44. But on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. If you arouse the wrath of Christ and the Rock of Ages falls on you—a huge cliff comes toppling from its lofty height upon the traveler and crushes him past all recognition—you will be ground to powder.

46, 46. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spoke of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a Prophet. Unhappy peop1e, to reject Him who alone could bless them— and yet to stand in fear of Him whom they tried to despise! Let it not be so with any of us, but may Jesus become our Teacher, our Friend and our Savior forever, by His abounding Grace! Amen.

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 6

Luke 19,10 #3050 - The Errand of Mercy

THE ERRAND OF MERCY

NO. 3050

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 25, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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DURING THE YEAR 1863.

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10.

GOD came down from Heaven but once to be united with human flesh. On what errand did He come and who were the objectives of it? What messenger was sent on that errand? What method was pursued by Him? With what success was it attended? Our text gives us the information—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Let us speak briefly upon these four points.

I. First, AS TO THE OBJECTIVE OF CHRIST'S ERRAND—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

That word, "lost," is constantly applied by desponding and despairing persons to themselves. Such people say, "We are lost—we feel that we are lost, wholly lost. There is no hope for us." Herein they betray both their ignorance and their unbelief—their ignorance, for to be lost is nothing so peculiar that they should claim to be heritors of a strange doom since the whole human race is lost! And their unbelief since Christ came especially to seek and to save the lost. Therefore, their being lost is not a ground for despair, but may be construed into a ground of hope! Let us think over that word, "lost," and see in what sense those are lost whom Christ came to save.

Christ came to save those who were lost hereditarily. You often hear people say, "Man is in a state of probation." No such thing! There is no man now in a state of probation. Adam was in a state of probation and man in Adam was in a state of probation in the Garden as long as he stood in obedience to the test that was given. He was upon his trial, but the moment that Adam tasted of the forbidden fruit, the probation was over—he was a lost man! And our probation was over, too, for we were lost in him. Man, in this world, is either in a state of condemnation or a state of salvation. "He that believes not" is not in a state of probation—he is "condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." We have Divine authority for this. A man who has believed in Jesus is not in a state of probation, for "there is therefore now no

condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." The fact is that we are all absolutely lost through the sin of Adam and we need a Revelation to show us that we are absolutely saved in the righteousness of Christ! It is not a question whether I shall fall or not—I have fallen in Adam. "By one man's disobedience," says the Apostle, "many were made sinners." I stood in Adam as long as he stood, but when Adam fell, he so represented me and all my kith and kin, that I fell in him—and fell so as to be hopelessly and forever lost—if Jesus Christ had not stepped in "to seek and to save that which was lost."

We are lost, again, in another sense. We are lost naturally. It is supposed by some that man has it now in his power to choose his own character and so become the arbiter of his own destiny. They say that his nature is, at first, in such a state of equilibrium that he can select either the strait and narrow path of rectitude, or pursue the broad road which leads to destruction. No, my dear Friends, both Scripture and experience teach us otherwise! We are born with natures that incline towards that which is evil and never of themselves tend towards that which is good! "Behold," says David, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Well did Job ask, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one." How, then, can he be pure who is born of a woman who is herself sinful? How can we, who are impure, be the parents of pure children? Such a thing is not possible! The whole head of human nature is sick and the whole heart faint. Naturally from our very birth we go astray, speaking lies! There is written upon human nature, by the finger of our first parent, this word, "Lost!"—lost to God, therefore lost to the virtuous exercise of the affections and the true balance of the judgment, lost to rectitude, the will lost to obedience, the mental vision lost as to a sight of God, the moral sense lost as to that proper sensibility of conscience by which it shall stand out against sin. The reigning power in man is dislodged from its place—manhood's glory, his victory and integrity lost, lost forever—unless some greater Man shall restore it. This is how we truthfully describe the whole human race and so, surely, those whom Christ came to save were hereditarily and naturally lost.

Among these, there are some so totally lost to all feeling that they do not know they are lost. Even the preaching of the Gospel does not suffice to bring them to a consciousness of their condition. Their conscience has become seared and their heart hardened by perversity in sin. If they once knew what it was to tremble at the wrath to come, that time is past. Even the wooing of Divine Mercy fall upon them as oil would fall upon marble and runs off without producing any effect. They wish they could feel. They envy souls that despair and wish that they could, themselves, despair. They despair, however, of ever being able to get into a good enough state of heart to despair! "If anything is felt," they say, "'tis only pain to find we cannot feel," and not much of that is felt. Now, even such Jesus Christ came to save—and we know this because such were some of us! Do not I recollect the time when I would have given my eyes for a tear and would have been willing to suffer anything if I could have but bent my knees and uttered one groan? But my heart would not yield a sigh or my eyes a tear! I turned to the Book of God but that did not move me. I listened to the preacher without emotion. It seemed as if even a dying Savior's groans could never move a heart so base as mine—and yet I bear witness that Christ came to save such, for I do myself rejoice in His salvation! You who are lost to all feeling may well catch at this text, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Then there are others who are lost to all hope. It is in vain that you pray with them. They rise up from their knees and thank you for your prayers, but they are assured that God will never hear

them. They sometimes pray—necessity drives them to their knees—but they pray with the conviction that they are merely talking to a God whose mind is made up about them and determined to cast them forever from His Presence. Comforts that are available to others are of no use to them. You may skillfully seek to adjust your consolation so as to suit their case, but they ward off your comfort as skillfully as a warrior guards himself from the enemy's arrow with his shield. They will not hear a word of comfort, charm you ever so wisely. They have made up their minds that there cannot be anything in the Book of God for them except thunder and lightning and "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Yes, and if they had their own names put in the Bible and a promise appended to their names, they would deny their own names and the promise too! They have come to be in such a state of subjection to that tyrant, Unbelief, that they say, "Never shall we have hope. It is impossible that such sinners as we are, should ever be partakers of eternal life." If you ask them the reason for their despair, they cannot always tell you. "No," they say, "we would not tell any man living what we have done and what we feel." In one case it is some overwhelming sin. In another case it is having resisted at certain periods the convictions of conscience. Or yet again, it is old age—their having been living so long a time in impenitence. They have all different arguments and none of them are the arguments of truth.

They believe Satan's lie that God is not willing to forgive, in preference to God's own oath—"As I live," says the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." I do not know how it is that these poor souls manage to get away from such texts as these—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." And such an one as this—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." I say again that I do not know how they escape from the soothing influence of such words of hope, but they do manage, by some means, to fly from them! And still they hug their chains and sit in a sort of willful bondage in the darkness of their dungeon. Yet Jesus came to save just

Volume 53 3such sinners as those and there are some here of elastic step and bright eyes who once were "bound in affliction and iron!" But you have been brought out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Christ has broken your bonds asunder! You can now sing praises unto God and your songs shall testify to others, who were your fellow captives, that Jesus Christ has come "to seek and to save that which was lost."

Some whom Christ saves are lost socially. Their names are not mentioned in the family—they would bring such a pang to the mother's heart, such a flush to the father's cheek. They could not now enter into any respectable society—they are marked men and marked women. There are some who are lost even before the law of the land. The hand of justice has been laid upon them and they are held in bonds under the law. It may be that they are even marked as felons. Yet the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are socially lost! When the gates of society are shut, the gates of Mercy are not shut. When man considers the case to be utterly hopeless and the social outcasts are put into a sort of leper colony lest the infection should spread, Jesus walks into the colony and touches the leper and says, "Be you clean." You may shut them out from yourselves, but not from the Savior! When they have come to their worst and have run the whole round of dissipation till they are jaded and sick, still can the Master step in and whisper into that

ear rendered attentive by pain and sickness—and snatch the fire-brand from the flame—to the Glory of His own Grace!

Others whom the Savior doubtless came to save, were, at one time, lost avowedly and determinedly. There have been those who have made a league with Satan and a covenant with death. They have said, "Turn to God? Never! We will burn first." They have not only resisted conscience, but they have, as it were, proclaimed war to the knife against God Himself! They have called Heaven and earth to witness that they were the slaves of Satan and had chosen him to be their master—and would serve him to their dying hour! Yet their covenant with death has been broken and their league with Hell has been broken! God has, by mighty Grace, made them quite as decidedly His servants as they were once the servants of the Evil One! Oh, what has not Grace done, and what can it not still do? Take the word, "lost," in the very worst possible sense that you can attach to it and still my text shall apply to it also—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Perhaps of all lost souls, the most miserably lost are those who perish under the sound of the Gospel. There are some of you who have been prayed over, preached at and wept over year after year till you seem to be hopeless cases. You yourselves feel that there is a hardness which is begotten in the light of the Gospel which is not begotten anywhere else. The same sun which melts wax hardens clay and it has hardened you after an awful fashion till, now, you really dread to hear the Gospel lest you should drift still further away from God! Well, even such lost ones Jesus came to save! I am conscious that my language cannot sufficiently express the extent to which the word, "lost," may be applied. Some of you think there is very little difference between you and the damned in Hell— they feel the flame—you are waiting for it. You feel that they are undergoing the execution while you are in the condemned cell. They have heard Christ say, "Depart, you cursed." You feel that you are cursed though He has not yet said to you, "Depart." You think (though you think wrongly, let me say), that your death warrant has been signed and sealed—you declare that you might as well be banished from this world, for you know that if you live ever so long, you will live and die without hope and without God! Ah, poor Soul! Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save just such sinners as you are! And I trust, notwithstanding all you say to the contrary, He has come to seek and to save you—even you.

Such are the woe-begone objects of this mission of mercy! Now let us turn to the Messenger of mercy—the Savior of the lost!

II. If the lost are to be saved, someone of extraordinary character must come to do it. No, IF THEY ARE TO BE SOUGHT AND FOUND, THERE MUST BE A SPECIAL MESSENGER.

Ordinary men, if they go to seek the lost ones, soon grow weary in the search. Perhaps they have to seek them where pride does not like to go, or to follow them when their perseverance fails and their patience cannot endure. It needs a special One to seek the lost. But when the sinner is found, who can save the found one? No human arm is long enough, no human merits strong enough, no human plea prevalent enough—it is delightful, therefore, to read that "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Who is this Son of Man? "Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever." Though peerless in dignity, He assumes a humble title with a lowly estate when He condescends to undertake this menial

service. Before He came to be the Son of Mary, He was the eternal Son of God! He sat upon the Throne of His Glory, adored by the spirits which His own hand had made, but He came down from yonder starry sky to seek and save the lost! This proves how full of pity, how condescending and how kind was God's eternal Son. Lost one, here is some comfort for you! If Jesus, from His Throne of Glory, pitied you in your lost estate and if it is the same pitying One who is come to seek and to save the lost, then is He not the One to find and to save you?

But remember who He is, "the Son of Man." He gives Himself that title, "the Son of Man!" He feels as you feel. He was tempted in all points like you are tempted. He never had a single sin of His own, but He bore the sins of many and He knows what the weight of sin is. You think Christ has forsaken you and Christ once thought His Father had forsaken Him—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He cried. You are broken in heart. He knows what that means for He said, "Reproach has broken My heart." You think that all God's waves and billows have gone over you. He said they had all gone over Him and in very truth they had!

Volume 53 5It is not possible that you should have a grief deeper than that which the Savior knew. You cannot plunge lower than He went. What if I say that though sin is come over you so that you cannot look up, there cannot be so black a cloud of sin between you and God as there was once between the Substitute and the Father—for ALL the sins of His elect ones rolled like an ocean's tempest between the God of Justice and the Surety who was smitten in our place! Think of Christ, you who are lost, as being just such an One as yourself, except in the matter of sin—poor, having not where to lay His head—destitute, afflicted and tormented as much as you can be. He is the Son of Man! Oh, rest you upon that tender bosom and confide in that compassionate heart!

If it were merely that He came from Heaven, it would be a proof of love and a token of sympathy, but that is not enough. It is written, "He is come to seek and to save." Here is a proof of His activity. He does not sit still and pity men, does not stand up and propose a plan for them, but He is come to seek and to save them! The angels celebrated His Advent when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The Son of Man is come! They watched Him in His journey through the 30 years of His earthly pilgrimage and they seemed to sing, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save." But how the song must have deepened with a wondrous emphasis when they saw Him sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane, when they saw Him bound, scourged and tormented by the Roman soldiers, when they saw Him bearing the weight of the Cross, when they marked Him fastened to the accursed tree, pouring out His soul in streams of blood! How they must have felt, then, that the Son of Man was come to seek and to save! Earth heard the note, "The Son of Man is come." Sin heard it and Death heard it—and when the Savior bowed His head upon the Cross, there went up a great shout, "The Son of Man is come!" And startled Hell heard it when Satan saw those whom he had expected to be his prey, delivered by the strong arm of the dying Sufferer! Heaven heard it as the peal rolled upward and angels said, "The Son of Man is come to bring up here that which was lost." So, then, there is activity in the Savior and on this you may rely!

I shall say but little more concerning the Savior, except these few thoughts on which you may meditate at your leisure. He who has come to save the lost, loved sinners from before the foundation of the world, was appointed of God to be their Savior, comes on a Divine mission clothed with the Spirit of Power, comes with an atoning Sacrifice in His hands, comes with a plea

in His mouth—the voice of blood, "which speaks better things than that of Abel"—comes with love beaming from His eyes and overpowering compassion in His heart! He comes not to those who come to Him, but to those who cannot come and are afraid to come! The Son of Man, none other than He who said, "I am meek and lowly of heart," has come to seek and to save the lost!

III. Now notice THE PLAN OF THIS LOVING COMMISSION. It does not say, "He is come to save" merely, but, "to seek and to save." It is an astounding thing and a great proof of human depravity that men do not, themselves, seek salvation. They even deny the necessity of it and would sooner run away than be partakers of it! If you pass by a dispensary in the morning, you will often see the poor outpatients at the door. And when the time comes for the doctor to see them, many will be found waiting in his outer room, but you do not often hear of a doctor who goes out seeking for gratis patients. But my Savior not only cures, but seeks the patients out—and if He did not, He would never have patients, for our sickness is of a kind that never brings men to the Physician, but drives them farther and farther from Him!

He is come to seek them. He seeks them by the Gospel. Tonight He seeks some of you. He seeks them by Providence. Sometimes His rough Providences seek them. At other times the daily mercies of His goodness beckon them to come. He seeks them by the death of their fellows—a mother's dying bed, the snatching of a baby to Heaven—all these are the ways in which Jesus is seeking that which was lost. He seeks them effectually by His Spirit. His Spirit comes and reveals to them their darkness, points them to Christ, the true Light, and thus clearly they are found out, just where they are, and stand discovered to themselves in their ruin.

But it is added that He not only came to seek, but to save. "Oh!" says one, "I don't need any seeking. I am found. Convinced of my folly, here I sit, and acknowledge my sin. I am indeed sought out and found, but I need saving." Now, Friend, the Son of Man has come to save the lost, as well as to seek them. And He does it in this way—He saves them from the guilt of past sin. In one moment, as soon as ever the blood of Christ is applied to the conscience, every past sin is gone and the man is, in God's sight, as if He had never sinned. Christ puts away iniquity in a moment. The next thing He does is that He kills the power of sin within and makes the man "a new creature." He does not merely save him from the guilt of the past, but from the power of sin in the present! If He does not tear up sin by the roots, He at least cuts it down. And sin does not have dominion over us because we are not under the Law, but under Grace. The man who has trembled long, trembles no longer! He who was sinking deeper and deeper in the mire feels that there is a new song in his mouth and that his goings are established. And as He saves him from the power of sin in the present, so He saves him from future falling. He saves, not only for a year, or for ten years and then lets men fall, but He finally and completely saves that which was lost! And this one act will enable you, sinner, to realize all this blessedness—cast your guilty soul on Him who saves you! Do this with your whole heart and your sin is blotted out— your soul is saved and you may go in peace!

IV. Lastly, let us rejoice in THE SUCCESS OF THIS BLESSED SCHEME. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was

Volume 53 7lost." Does He succeed in what He came to do? He does, thank God! And in these later times we live to see how the Master saves that which was lost. The opening of the theatres for the preaching of the Word has been a very blessed thing. The raising up of Evangelists who

have gone throughout the land preaching the Word has been a proof that the Son of Man has not ceased to seek and to save! When I look back to 11 years ago, when I commenced my pastorate in London, [1851] I recollect that there seemed to be very little care, then, about the preaching of the Word. We could not, then, do what we now can—count up some 20 Evangelists always going through the country, and all of them in their measure useful men—I mean such men as Richard Weaver, Reginald Radcliffe and Brownlow North and a great many others, all in their way adapted to the work. It seemed then as if the Church of Christ had given up seeking the lost—but God has raised up one and another for the purpose of preaching the Word, fulfilling this Scripture, that "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Some say, "If the people want to hear the Gospel, let them go to church or chapel—they can always hear the Gospel when they like." That is not Christ's way! We are to go and seek them! Open-air preaching is a blessed institution and though you may sometimes block up a thoroughfare, it is better to do that than that the thoroughfare to Hell should be crowded! If you can turn a soul from the road to Hell, it will not matter though you may turn some passenger in the street out of his way, so that he may have to muddy his boots! Midnight services, hunting after the poor sinners in the streets at midnight, the opening of Ragged Schools and Reformatories—all these things are the fulfilling of the word, "The Son of Man is come to seek that which was lost."

We know that He seeks, but does He save them? If I must give an answer from my own observation, I can point to many members of this congregation and say, "Save them? Indeed He does! Has He not delivered them from the bonds of sin? Has He not made them new creatures in Christ Jesus?" But if you look anywhere, wherever a faithful Gospel is preached, you will see that salvation-work does go on! I hope it may go on with us for many and many a year until Christ shall come. Christ is not disappointed in the souls He came to save. All for whom He stood as Substitute shall sing His praise in Heaven. He has not redeemed souls that may afterwards be cast into Hell. He did not suffer for my sins that I might suffer for them, too! His Atonement is effectual! Every sinner He died to save He does save. He is not foiled at any point, nor disappointed in any single aim. The lost He came to seek and save, He finds and saves! And in eternity we shall find, when turning over the register of the chosen, that every one of them has been gathered around the Eternal Throne singing the praise of His Sovereign Grace!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Luke 19:1-48. Verses 1-5. And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house. Remember that the Lord Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to suffer and to die. And there He was, the patient, suffering Lamb of God—but here He speaks in that commanding tone which well became the Prince of the House of David—"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house."

6. And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. Solomon said, "Where the word of a king is, there is power." Omnipotence went with the word of this King of kings, so Zacchaeus was bound to obey it.

7-11. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And as they heard these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear. Their minds were full of thoughts concerning Christ's coming as a King— and they had very mistaken notions concerning His Kingdom, so He indicates to them that, for the present, the practical matter to be remembered was that He had come "to seek and to save that which was lost." If they had not been so full of their idle dreams of a temporal sovereignty, they would have perceived that in the calling of Zacchaeus, Christ had manifested His Kingship in the realm of mercy and had there exercised the Sovereignty of His Grace. In order that they might be able the better to understand the meaning of His spiritual Kingdom and not have their eyes so dazzled by the illusions which had so long deceived the Jews, our Lord pointed out to them, in the parable of the pounds, the practical way of preparing for His Second Coming.

12-15. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he

Volume 53 9might know how much every man had gained by trading. It would have been well if our translators, instead of using that ugly Latin word, "occupy," had kept to the expression, "trade with it," for here we get the same words again—"that he might know how much every man had gained by trading."

16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds. The genuine servant, with due humility, puts himself in the background. It is not he who has "gained ten pounds"—it is his lord's pound that has done it. He is pleased to bring the ten pounds, yet he claims no credit for himself, but says, "Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds."

17. And he said unto him, Well, you good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have you authority over ten cities. There is no comparison between the servant's work and the reward for its faithful performance. That ten pounds, if his lord had given it all to him, would not have bought a house in a village, unless it had been a very tiny one— "a cottage in a vineyard," or "a lodge in a garden of cucumbers." Yet his lord gives him "authority over ten cities."

18, 19. And the second came, saying, Lord, your pound has gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be you also over five cities. How he must have opened his eyes when he received authority over five cities!

20. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin. The napkin with which he ought to have wiped away the sweat from his brow, he had used merely as a wrapper for the pound that his lord had entrusted to him for the purpose of trading with

it. He had done nothing with the pound—he thought he was all right because he had not done any harm with his lord's money. He had not joined the revolting citizens who said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." He had not spent the pound, nor embezzled his master's money—in fact, he had been very careful to keep intact the treasure that had been entrusted to him—and he felt proud of his own prudence and said, "Lord, behold, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin."

21. For I feared you, because you are an austere man: you take up that you lay not down, and reap that you did not sow. This was impudence indeed! But his master took him on his own ground and showed that even if his statement had been true, he ought to have been the more diligent in obeying his lord's command.

22, 23. And he said unto him, Out of your own mouth will I judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: therefore then gave not you my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required my own with usury? "You might have done that, at any rate, even if you were afraid to trade with it, as I bade you." God often deals with men on their own ground and condemns them out of their own mouth. They say that God is very severe in threatening them with "the wrath to come." Well, if you so believe and so speak, there is the more reason why you should fear to disobey Him and so to incur His just displeasure! If, in spite of such terrible threats, you still defy Him, it only brings out the more clearly the greatness of your guilt!

24, 25. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that has ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he has ten pounds). They were quite astonished. "What? Give more to the man who has so much already?" "Yes," says the master, "that is my command."

26. For I say unto you, That unto everyone which has shall be given; and from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Hear again the note of sovereignty. Christ will do as He wills! And His mode of action shall sometimes be so singular that even His own attendants will wonder at the strangeness of His procedure and will begin to ask, "How is this?" But, as Elihu said to Job, "He gives not account of any of His matters."

27-31. But those my enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before me." And when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He was come near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, saying, Go you into the village over against you; in the which at your entering you shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him here. And if any man asks you, Why do you loose him? Thus shall you say unto him, Because the Lord has need of him. Here we see Christ's true royalty again flashing out from beneath the humiliation of His Humanity! He lets us know that although He is going up to Jerusalem to die, it is not because He is not Lord of All! But that being Lord of All, He makes Himself of no reputation, takes upon Himself the form of a Servant, is made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbles Himself and becomes "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

32-34. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as He had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose you the colt? And they said, The Lord has need of him. The word of the King was again with power and the owners of the colt were willing to let the animal go since the King had "need of him." They may have been secret disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we have no information upon that point. Our King's warrant runs anywhere—and even when His personal Presence is not consciously realized, His royal and Divine word still rules the minds and hearts of men!

35-38. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come near, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began

Volume 53 11 to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen. Saying, Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord: peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest. They were so jubilant that they seemed to have caught some notes from the song that the angels sang at the Savior's birth—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." There had been war in Heaven, but these disciples of Christ sang, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest."

39-41. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Your disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it. What a contrast! The King's courtiers shouting for joy and the King, Himself, weeping over the guilty city where the greatest tragedy in the history of the whole universe was about to take place! The King saw, in the near and more remote future, what no one else could see, so, "when He was come near, and beheld the city, He wept over it."

42-48. Saying, If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you that your enemies shall cast a trench about you, and compass you round, and keep you in on every side, and shall lay you even with the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you knew not the time of your visitation. And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the House of Prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the Temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him. There was a popular wave of enthusiasm in His favor but, alas, it soon ebbed away and then the multitudes that had cried, "Hosanna!" were just as loud in their shouts of, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 19,10 #3309 - Christ the Seeker and Savior of

CHRIST THE SEEKER AND

SAVIOR OF THE LOST

NO. 3309

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 4, 1912.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are Sermons #204, Volume 4—

THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN; #1100, Volume 19—GOOD NEWS

FOR THE LOST; #2756 Volume 47—SAVING THE LOST and

#3050, Volume 53—THE ERRAND OF MERCY—

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mons free of charge athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] How shall we crown the edifice? The best wine should be kept for the last, but where shall we find it? The choice is wide, but amid so many wonders, which shall we select? What shall be the seventh great work concerning which we shall extol Him? Many marvels suggested themselves to me and each one was, assuredly, worthy to occupy the place, but as I could not take all, I resolved to close with one of the simplest and most practical. His saving sinners seemed to me to be practically the chief of all His works, for it was for this purpose that the rest of His achievements were attempted and performed. Had it not been for the salvation of men, I know not that we had ever known our Lord as the Destroyer of Death or the Overcomer of Satan and, certainty, if He had not saved the lost, I am unable to perceive what

Glory there would have been in the overcoming of the world, or in the creation of all things new. The salvation of men was the prize of His life's race—for this He girded up His loins and distanced every adversary! The salvation of the lost was "the joy which was set before Him," for the sake of which He "endured the Cross, despising the shame."

Although it seems, at first sight, that in selecting our present topic we have descended from the transcendent glories of our Champion to more common things, it is, indeed, not so. The victories of our Lord which are written in the Book of the wars of the Lord, when He led captivity captive and robbed death of his sting, may strike us as more astounding, but yet in very truth this is the summing-up of His great works—this is the issue, the flower, and crown of all! "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," is a sentence as majestic as Prophet ever penned when in fullest Inspiration he extolled the Prince of Peace!

I. Notice, first, OUR LORD'S GRACIOUS MISSION—"The Son of Man is come."

When He was here among men, He could use the present tense and say, "is come." That was an improvement upon what Prophets had to say, for they only spoke of Him as The Coming One—as One who, in the fullness of time, would be manifested. The promise was amazing, but what shall I say of the actual performance when the Word made flesh could say, "The Son of Man is come"? To us, today, the coming of Christ to seek and to save the lost is an accomplished fact, a matter of history, most sure and certain. And what a fact it is! You have often thought of it, but have you ever worked your mind into the very heart of it—that God has actually visited this world in human form—that He before whom angels bow has actually been here, in fashion like ourselves, feeding the hungry crowds of Palestine, healing their sick and raising their dead? I know not what may be the peculiar boast of other planets, but this poor star cannot be excelled, for on this world the Creator has stood! This earth has been trodden by the feet of God and yet it was not crushed beneath the mighty burden because He designed to link His Deity with our humanity! The Incarnation is a wonder of wonders, but it does not belong to the realm of imagination or even of expectation, for it has actually been beheld by mortal eyes! We claim your faith for a fact which has really taken place. If we asked you by faith to expect a marvel yet to come, we trust the Spirit of God would enable you to do so, that, like Abraham, you might foresee the blessing and be glad. But the miracle of miracles has been worked! The Son of the Highest has been here. From Bethlehem to Calvary, He has traversed life's pilgrimage. Thirty years or more yonder canopy of sky hung above the head of Deity in human form. O wondrous joy! Say rather, O matchless hive of perfect sweets, for a thousand joys lie close compacted in the word, "Immanuel"—God With Us!—

"Welcome to our wondering sigh. Eternity within a span! Summer in winter! Day in night! Heaven in earth! And God in man! Great Little One, whose glorious birth Lifts the earth to Heaven, stoops Heaven to earth."

Our Lord had come upon His sacred mission as soon as He was really the Son of Man, for before He was known only as the Son of God. Others had borne the name of "son of man," but none deserved it so well as He. Ezekiel, for reasons which we need not now stay to consider, is called, "son of man," a very large number of times. Perhaps, like John in Christ's own day, Ezekiel had much of the spirit and character which were manifest in our Lord—and so the name was the more suitable to him. Certainly he had Christ's eagle eyes, Christ's spiritual Nature and was filled with light and knowledge—and so, as if to remind him that he who is like his Lord in excellence must

also have fellowship with Him in lowliness, he is again and again reminded that he is still "the son of man." When our Lord came into this world, He seemed to select that title of "Son of Man" for Himself and make it His own special name—and worthily so, for other men are the sons of this man or that, but His is no restricted humanity—it is manhood of the universal type. Jesus is not born into the race of the Jews so much as into the human family. He is not to be claimed for any age, place, or nationality—He is "the Son of Man"— and this, I say, is how He comes to man. So that as long as Christ is the Son of Man, we may still say of Him that He comes to seek and to save the lost! I know that, in Person, He has gone back to Heaven. I know that the cloud has received Him out of our sight. But the very taking upon Himself of our humanity was a coming down to seek and save the lost— and as He has not laid that Humanity aside, He is still with men, continuing to seek and to save even to this day! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." So that, if I treat the text as if Jesus were still among us, I would not err, for He is here in the sense of seeking the same end, though it is by His Spirit and by His servants rather than by His own bodily Presence! He has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," and that saying is found in connection with the agency which He has established for seeking and saving lost men, by making men disciples and teaching them the way of life! As long as this dispensation lasts, it will still be true that the great Savior and Friend of man has come among us and is seeking and saving the lost!

II. Now, secondly, let us see HIS MAIN INTENT IN COMING HERE BELOW—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The intent breaks itself up into two points, the persons—the lost. And the purpose—the seeking and the saving of them.

Christ's Mal. intent in coming here bore upon the lost. Proud men do not like us to preach this Truth of God. It was but yesterday that I saw it alleged against Christianity that it discourages virtue and patronizes the guilty. They say that we ministers lift the sinful into the most prominent place and give them the preference above the moral and excellent in our preaching. This is a soft impeachment to which, in a better sense than is intended by those who bring it, we are glad to plead guilty! We may well be excused if our preaching seeks the lost, for these are the persons whom our Lord has come to seek and to save. The main stress and intent of the Incarnation of God in the Person of Christ lies with the guilty, the fallen, the unworthy, the lost. His errand of mercy has nothing to do with those who are good and righteous in themselves, if such there is, but it has to do with sinners—real sinners, guilty not of nominal but of actual sins—and who have gone so far therein as to be lost! Why do you quibble at this? Why should He come to seek and to save that which is not lost? Should the Shepherd seek the sheep which has not gone astray? Answer me. Why should He come to be the Physician of those who are not lost? Should He light a candle and sweep the house to look for pieces of silver which are not lost, but lie bright and untarnished in His hand? To what

Volume 58 3purpose would this be? Would you have Him paint the lily and gild it with refined gold? Would you make Him a mere busybody offering superfluous aid? With those who think themselves pure, what has the cleaning blood of Jesus to do? Is the Savior a needless Person and was His work a needless business? It must be so if it is intended for those who do not need it!

Who needs a Savior most? Answer this. Should not mercy exercise itself where there is most need for it? This world is like a battlefield over which the fierce hurricanes of conflict have swept and the surgeons have come to deal with those who lie upon its plains. To whom shall they go first? Shall they not turn first to those who are most terribly wounded and who are bleeding almost to the death? Will you quarrel with us if we declare that the first to be taken to the hospital should be those who are in direst need? Will you be angry if we say that the liniment is for the wounded, that the bandages are for the broken limbs and that the medicine is for the sick? A strange quarrel this would be! If ever it should begin, a fool must begin it, for no wise man would ever raise the question! Blessed Christ of God, we will not quibble because You also come in Your mercy to those who need You most, even to the lost!

And who do you think will love Him best and so reward Him best if He comes to them? The proud Pharisee in his perfection of imaginary holiness—will he value the Christ who tells him that He comes to wash away his sin? He turns upon his heels with scorn! What sin has he to wash away? The self-satisfied moralist who dares to say, "All these commands I have kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"—is he likely to become a disciple of the Great Teacher whose first lessons are, "Yet must be bornagain," and, "Except you are converted and become as little children you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven"? The fact is that Jesus has no form nor comeliness to those who have a beauty of their own! Christ gets most love where He pardons most sin. And the sweetest obedience to His command is rendered by those who once were most disobedient, but who are gently led beneath His sway by the force of grateful love. Yon sterile hills of fancied holiness yield Him no harvest and, therefore, He leaves them to their own boastfulness. But meanwhile, He scatters plenteous grain among the lowlands where the ground is broken and lies ready for the seed. He preaches pardon to those who know that they have sinned and confess the same—but those who have no sin, have no Savior.

But after all, dear Friends, if Jesus did not direct His mission of salvation to the lost, to whom else could He have come? For truth to say, there are none but the lost on the face of this whole earth! The proudest Pharisee is but a sinner and all the more a sinner for his pride. And the moralist who thinks himself so clean is filthy in the sight of God! Though he labors to conceal the spots, the self-righteous man is a leper and will forever remain so unless Jesus cleanses Him. It is a thrice-blessed fact that Christ came to save the lost, for such are we all—and had He not made lost ones the object of His searching and saving, there would have been no hope for us!

What is meant by "the lost"? Well, "lost" is a dreadful word. I would need much time to explain it, but if the Spirit of God, like a flash of light, shall enter into your heart and show you what you are by nature, you will accept that word, "lost," as descriptive of your condition and understand it better than a thousand words of mine could enable you to do! Lost by the Fall! Lost by inheriting a depraved nature! Lost by your own acts and deeds! Lost by a thousand omissions of duty and lost by countless deeds of overt transgressions! Lost by habits of sin! Lost by tendencies and inclinations which have gathered strength and dragged you downward into deeper and yet deeper darkness and iniquity! Lost by inclinations which never turn of themselves to that which is right, but which resolutely refuse Divine Mercy and Infinite Love! We are lost willfully and willingly—lost perversely and utterly! But still lost of our own accord which is the worst kind of being lost that can possibly be! We are lost to God, who has lost our heart's love, lost our confidence and lost our obedience! We are lost to the Church, which we cannot serve. Lost to the Truth of God which we

will not see. Lost to right, whose cause we do not uphold. Lost to Heaven, into whose sacred precincts we can never come! Lost—so lost that unless Almighty Mercy shall intervene, we shall be cast into the Pit that is bottomless to sink forever! "LOST! LOST! LOST!" The very word seems to me to be the knell of an impenitent soul. "Lost! Lost! Lost!" I hear the dismal tolling! A soul's funeral is being celebrated! Endless death has befallen an immortal being! It comes up as a dreadful wail from far beyond the boundaries of life and hope, forth from those dreary regions of death and darkness where spirits dwell who would not have Christ to reign over them. "Lost! Lost! Lost!" Ah me, that ever these ears should hear that doleful sound! Better a whole world on fire than a lost soul! Better every star quenched and yon skies a wreck than a single soul to be lost!

Now, it is for souls that soon will be in that worst of all conditions and are already preparing for it, that Jesus came here seeking and saving. What joy is this! In proportion as the grief was heavy, the joy is great. If souls can be delivered from going down into such a state, it is a feat worthy of God, Himself. Glory be to His holy name!

Now note the purpose—He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." Ah, this is a Truth of God worth preaching—this Doctrine that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save sinners. Some people tell me that He comes "to make men salvable"—to put all men into such a condition that it is possible that they may be saved. I believe that men may be saved, but I see no very great wonder in the fact. It does not stir my blood, or incite me to dance for joy. I do not know that it makes even the slightest impression upon me! I can go to sleep and I am sure I shall not wake up in the night and long to get up at once to preach such poor news as that Jesus came to make men salvable! I would not have become a minister to

Volume 58 5preach so meager a Gospel! But that our Lord came to save men—that is substantial and satisfying news, far exceeding the other! To make men salvable is a skeleton, bones and skin—but to save them is a living blessing! To make men salvable is a farthing blessing, but to save them is untold wealth!

They say also that Jesus came into the world to let men be saved if they will. I am glad of that. It is true and good. I believe that every truly willing soul may be saved, yes, such an one is, in a measure, saved already! If there is a sincere will towards salvation—understand, towards true salvation—that very will indicates that a great change has commenced within the man and I rejoice that it is written, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But now just read our text as if it ran thus—"The Son of Man is come that whoever wills to be saved may be saved." The sense is good, but very feeble! How the wine is mixed with water! But, oh, what flavor, what essence, what marrow, what fatness there is in this, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"! This is the Gospel! And the other is but a part of the Good News. Again, read the text another way, "The Son of Man is come to help men to save themselves." This will not do at all. It is something like helping men to march who have no legs, or helping blind men to judge colors, or helping dead men to make themselves alive. Help to those who can do nothing at all is a miserable mockery. No, we cannot have our Bibles altered that way! We will let the text stand as it is—in all its fullness of Divine Grace!

Nor is it even possible for us to cut down our text to this, "The Son of Man is come to save those who seek Him." If it ran so, I would bless God forever for it, for it would be a glorious Gospel text even then. There are Scriptures which teach that Doctrine and it is a blessed Truth for which to be

supremely grateful. But my text goes very much further, for it says, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." I met with a question and answer the other day, "Where did the Samaritan woman find the Savior? She found Him at the well." I do not quibble at that mode of expression, but mark you, that is not how I would ask the question! I should rather enquire, "Where did the Savior find the woman?" For, surely, she was not seeking Him—I see no indication that she had any such idea in her mind! She was looking after water from the well—and if she had found that—she would have gone home satisfied. No, those are the finders, surely, who are the seekers! And so it must be that Christ found the woman, for He was looking after her. While I bless my Lord that He will save you if you seek Him, I am still more thankful that there are men and women whom He will seek as well as save! No, that there never was a soul saved yet but Christ sought it first! He is the Author as well as the Finisher of faith. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending of the work of Grace! Let His name be praised for it! The text must stand as it is and we will adore the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love which has made it true! Successful seeking and complete saving belong to the Son of Man—some of us have experienced both. Oh, that all of us might yet do so!

III. Now we pass on, thirdly, to notice A DOUBLE DIFFICULTY. We see Christ's errand and we at once perceive that He has come to deal with people who are lost in two senses and in each sense a miracle of Grace is needed for their deliverance. They are so lost that they need saving, but they are also so lost that they need seeking. Persons may be so lost on land or on sea as to need saving and not seeking—but we were spiritually lost so as to need both saving and seeking too.

I heard, a little while ago, of a party of Friends who went to the lakes of Cumberland and endeavored to climb the Langdale Pikes. One of the many found the labor of the ascent too wearisome and so resolved that he would go back to the little inn from which they started. Being a wiser man than some, in his own esteem, he did not take the winding path by which they had ascended. He thought he would go straight down, for he could see the house just below, and fancied he should pitch upon it all of a sudden and show the mountaineers that a straight line is the nearest road! Well, after descending and descending, leaping many a rugged place, he found himself, at last, on a ledge from which he could go neither up nor down. After many vain attempts, he saw that he was a prisoner. In a state of wild terror, he took off his garments and tore them into shreds to make a line and, tying the pieces together, he let them down, but he found that they reached nowhere at all in the great and apparently unfathomable abyss which yawned below him. So he began to call aloud, but no answer came from the surrounding hills except the echo of his own voice! He shouted by the half-hour together, but there was no answer, neither was there anyone within sight. His horror nearly drove him out of his wits. At last, to his intense joy, he saw a figure move in the plain below and he began to shout again. Happily it was a woman, who, hearing his voice, stopped. And as he called again, she came nearer and called out, "Stay where you are. Do not stir an inch. Stay where you are!" He was lost, but he no longer needed seeking, for some friendly shepherds soon saw where he was. All he needed was saving—and so the mountaineers descended with a rope, as they were known to do when rescuing lost sheep—and soon brought him out of danger. He was lost, but he did not need seeking—they could see where he was.

A month or two ago, you must have noticed in the papers a notice about a gentleman who had left Wastwater some days before to go over the hills and had not been heard of since. His friends had to seek him so that, if still alive, he might be saved. And there were those who traversed hill and

moor to find him, but they were unable to save him because they could not find him. If they could have found out where he was, I do not doubt that had he been in the most imminent peril, the bold hill-men would have risked their lives to rescue him. But, alas, he was never found or saved—his lifeless corpse was the only discovery which was ultimately made. This last is the true image of our deplorable condition—

Volume 58 7we are by nature, lost—so that nothing but seeking and saving together will be of a service to us.

Let us see how our Lord accomplished the saving. That has been done, completely done. My dear Friends, you and I were lost in the sense of having broken the Law of God and having incurred His anger. But Jesus came and took the sin of men upon Himself and, as their Surety and their Substitute, He bore the wrath of God so that God can henceforth be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. I would like to die talking of this blessed Doctrine of Substitution and I intend, by Divine Grace, to live proclaiming it, for it is the keystone of the Gospel! Jesus Christ did literally take upon Himself the transgression and iniquity of His people and was made a curse for them, seeing that they had fallen under the wrath of God! And now every soul that believes in Jesus is saved because Jesus has taken away the penalty and the curse due to sin. In this let us rejoice!

Christ has also saved us from the power of Satan. The Seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head so that Satan's power is broken. Jesus has, by His Almighty Power, set us free from Hell's horrible yoke by vanquishing the Prince of Darkness and has, moreover, saved us from the power of death, so that to Believers it shall not be death to die! Christ has saved us from sin and all its consequence by His most precious death and Resurrection—

"See God descending in the Human frame, The Offended suffering in the offender's name! All your deeds to Him imputed see, And all His righteousness devolved on thee."

Our Lord's saving work is, in this sense, finished, but there is always going on in the world His seeking work—and I want you to think of it.

He can save us, blessed be His name! He has nothing more to do in order to save any soul that trusts Him. But we have wandered very far away, and are hidden in the wilds of the far country. We are very hungry and though there is bread enough and to spare, what is the use of it while we are lost to the home in which it is so freely distributed? We are very ragged—there is the best robe and it is ready to be put on us—but what is the good of it while we are so far away? There are the music and the dancing to make us glad and to cheer us, but what is the use of them while we still tarry among the swine? Here, then, is the great difficulty. Our Lord must find us, follow our wanderings and, treating us like lost sheep, He must bear us back upon His shoulders rejoicing!

Many need seeking because they are lost in bad company. Evil companions gather around men and keep them away from hearing the Gospel by which men are saved. There is no place to be lost in like a great city. When a man wants to escape the police, he does not run to a little village—he hides away in a thickly populated town. So this London has many hiding places where sinners get out of the Gospel's way! They lose themselves in the great crowd and are held captives by the slavish customs of the evil society into which they are absorbed. If they do but relent for a moment, some worldling plucks them by the sleeve and says, "Let us be merry while

we may! Why are you so melancholy?" Satan carefully sets a watch upon his younger servants to prevent their escaping from his hands. These pickets labor earnestly to prevent the man from hearing the good news of salvation lest he should be converted. Sinners therefore need seeking out from among the society in which they are imbedded— they need as much seeking after as the pearls of the Arabian Gulf!

The Lord Jesus Christ, in seeking men, has to deal with deep-seated prejudices. Many refuse to hear the Gospel—they would travel many miles to escape its warning message! Some are too wise, or too rich to have the Gospel preached to them. Pity the poor rich! The poor man has many missionaries and evangelists seeking him out, but who goes after the great ones? Some come from the East to worship, but who comes from the West? Many more will find their way to Heaven out of the back slums than ever will come out of the great mansions and palaces! Jesus must seek His elect among the rich under great disadvantages, but blessed be His name, He does seek them!

See how vices and depraved habits hold the mass of the poor classes! What a seeking out is needed among working men, for many of them are besotted with drunkenness! Look at the large part of London on the Lord's-Day—what have the working population been doing? They have been reading the Sunday newspaper and loafing about the house in their shirtsleeves and waiting at the posts of the doors—not of wisdom, but of the drink shop! These have been thirsting, but not after righteousness. Baachus still remains the god of this city and multitudes are lost among the beer barrels and the spirit casks! In such pursuits men waste the blessed Sabbath hours. How shall they be sought out? The Lord Jesus is doing it by His Holy Spirit!

Alas, through their ill ways, men's ears are stopped, their eyes are blinded and their hearts hardened so that the messengers of mercy have need of great patience! It would be easy work to save men if they could but be made willing to receive the Gospel, but they will not even hear it. When you do get them for a Sabbath-Day beneath the sound of a faithful ministry, how they struggle against it! They need seeking out 50 times over! You bring them right up to the Light of God and flash it upon their eyes, but they willfully and deliberately close their eyelids to it! You set before them life and death, and plead with them even unto tears that they would lay hold on eternal life—but they choose their own delusions. So long and so patiently must they be sought that this seeking work as much reveals the gracious heart of Jesus as did the saving work which He fulfilled upon the bloody tree!

Notice how He is daily accomplishing His search of love. Every day, Beloved, Jesus Christ is seeking men's ears. Would you believe it? He has to go about with wondrous wisdom even to get a hearing. They do not want to know the love message of their God. "God so loved the world"—they know all about that and do not want to hear any more.

Volume 58 9There is an Infinite Sacrifice for sin—they turn on their heels at such stale news. They would rather read an article in an infidel Review or a paragraph in the Police News. They want to know no more of spiritual matters! The Lord Jesus, in order to get at their ears, cries aloud by many earnest voices. Thank God He has ministers yet alive who mean to be heard and will not be put off with denials! Even the din of this noisy world cannot drown their testimony. Cry aloud, my Brother! Cry aloud and spare not, for cry as you may, you will not cry too loudly, for man will not hear if he can help it. Our Lord, to win men's ears, must use a variety of voices—musical or

rough—as His wisdom judges best. Sometimes He gains an audience by an odd voice whose quaintness wins attention—He will reach men when He means to save them!

That was an odd voice—surely the oddest I ever heard of—which came a little time ago in an Italian town to one of God's elect ones there. He was so depraved that he actually fell to worshipping the devil rather than God! It chanced, one day, that a rumor went through the city that a Protestant was coming there to preach. The priest, alarmed for his religion, told the people from the altar that Protestants worshipped the devil and he charged them not to go near the meeting room. The news, as you may judge, excited no horror in the devil-worshipper's mind. "Yes," he thought, "then I shall meet with brethren!" And so he went to hear our beloved missionary who is now laboring in Rome. Nothing else would have drawn the poor wretch to hear the Good Word—but this lie of the priest's was overruled to that end! He went and heard, not of the devil, but of the devil's Conqueror—and before long was found at Jesus' feet—a sinner saved!

I have known my Lord, when His ministers have failed, take out an arrow from His quiver and fix upon it a message, put it to His bow and shoot it right into a man's bosom till it wounded him. And as it wounded him and he lay moaning upon his bed, the message has been and accepted. I mean, that many a man in sickness has been brought to hear the message of salvation. Often, losses and crosses have brought men to Jesus' feet. Jesus seeks them so. When Absalom could not get an interview with Joab, he said, "Go and set his barley field on fire." Then Joab came down to Absalom and said, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" The Lord sometimes sends losses of property to men who will not otherwise hear Him—and at last their ears are gained! Whom He seeks, He in due time finds!

Well, after my Lord has sought men's ears, He next seeks their desires. He will have them long for a Savior—and this is not an easy thing to accomplish! But He has a way of showing men their sins—and then they wish for mercy. He shows them at other times the great joy of the Christian life—and then they wish to enter into the same delight. I pray that at this hour He may lead some of you to consider the danger you are in while you are yet unconverted, that so you may begin to desire Christ and in this way may be sought and found by Him! Then He seeks their faith. He seeks that they may come and trust Him—and He has ways of bringing them to this, for He shows them the suitability of His salvation and the fullness and the freeness of it! And when He has exhibited Himself as the sinners' Savior, and such a Savior as they need, then do they come and put their trust in Him. Then has He found them and saved them!

He seeks their hearts, for it is their hearts that He has lost. And oh, how sweetly does Christ, by the Holy Spirit, win men's affection and hold them fast! I shall never forget how He won mine—how first He gained my ear and then my desires, so that I wished to have Him for my Lord! And then He taught me to trust Him. And when I had trusted Him and found that I was saved, then I loved Him and I love Him still! So, dear Hearer, if Jesus Christ finds you, you will become His loving follower forever! I have been praying that He would bring this message under the notice of those whom He means to bless. I have asked Him to let me sow in good soil. I hope that among those who read these pages, there will be many whom the Lord Jesus has specially redeemed with His most precious blood— and I trust that He will appear at once to them and say to each one of them, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." May the eternal Spirit open your ears to hear the still small voice of love! By Omnipotent Grace may you be

made to yield to the Lord with the cheerful consent of your conquered will and accept that glorious Grace which will bring you to praise the seeking and saving Savior in Heaven! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Jeremiah 31:29-37.

(Concluded from Sermon #3308).

29, 30. In these days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. God was going to deal with the Israelites individually, personally—and that is how He will deal with us.

31. Behold. Here is something worth beholding—read this great promise with tears in your eyes—

31-33. The days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the Land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto you, says the LORD: but this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. [See Ser

mons #1687, Volume 28—THE LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART and #2992, Volume 52—GOD'S WRIT

ING UPON MAN'S HEART—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at

Volume 58 11http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is all wills and shalls—it is all Covenant life! No longer the Law engraved upon the tablets of stone, but the Law written on the heart—no more the Lord's command without man's power and will to obey it, but God will renew our nature and change our disposition so that we shall love to do what once we loathed—and shall loathe the sins that we once loved! What a wonderful mass of mercies is included in the Covenant of Grace!

34. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall all know Me—"All your children shall be taught of the Lord." All Believers, whatever else they may not know, do know their Lord—"they shall all know Me"—

34. From the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD. How will they learn to know the Lord? Well, it will be in a very wonderful way—

34. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. [See Sermon #2006, Volume 34—KNOWING THE LORD THROUGH PARDONED SIN— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] Let me read that again, and may some poor wandering children of God hear the promise and be glad that it applies to them—"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

35-37. Thus says the LORD, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar. The

LORD of Hosts is His name: if these ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus says the LORD; If Heaven above can be measured, and the foundation of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 8

Luke 19,12-13 #1960 - The Servants and the Pounds

THE SERVANTS AND THE POUNDS

NO. 1960

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1887,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself

a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants

and delivered to them ten pounds,

and said to them, Do business till I come."

Luke 19:12-13.

WE are told the reason for the Savior's delivering this parable at this particular time. He was going up to Jerusalem and the ignorant and enthusiastic crowd hoped that He might now set up a temporal sovereignty. "They thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear." Their minds were crowded with mistakes and the Savior would set them right upon this matter. To banish from their minds the idea of a Jewish empire in which every Hebrew would be a prince, our Lord told them this story—I use the word advisedly, for his parable was also a fact. He would show them that as yet they were not to be partakers in a kingdom, but were soon to be waiters for an absent Lord who had gone to receive a Kingdom and to return. In His absence, His disciples were to be in the position of servants put in trust with property while their Master was gone far away to receive a Kingdom and then to come again. He was now like a nobleman who may be one among many citizens, but He was going away to a court where He would be invested with royal authority—and He would come back a King. They were to be put in trust with certain pounds till He should return.

I confess I never thoroughly saw the meaning of this parable till I was directed by an eminent expositor to a passage in Josephus, which, if it is not the key of it, is a wonderfully close example of a class of facts which, no doubt, often occurred in the Roman empire in our Savior's day. Herod, you know, was king over Judea, but he was only a subordinate king under the Roman emperor. Caesar at Rome made and unmade kings at his pleasure. When Herod died, he was followed by his son, Archelaus, of whom we read in Matthew's account of our Lord's infancy that when Joseph heard that Archelaus was king in Judea in the place of his father, Herod, he was afraid to go there. This Archelaus had no right to the throne till he obtained the sanction of Caesar and, therefore, he took a ship with certain attendants and went to Rome, which, in those days, was a far country, that he might receive the kingdom and return.

While he was on the way, his citizens, who hated him, sent an embassage after him, so has the Revised Version correctly worded it—and this embassage bore this message to Caesar—"We will not that this man reign

Volume 33 1over us." The messengers represented to Caesar that Archelaus was not fit to be king of the Jews. Certain of the pleadings are recorded in Josephus and they show that barristers 1,900 years ago pleaded in much the same style as their brethren of today! The people were weary of the Herods and preferred anything to their cruel rule. They even asked that Judea might become a Roman province and be joined to Syria, rather than they should remain under the hated yoke of the Idumaean tyrants. It is evident that in the case of Archelaus his citizens hated him and said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It pleased Caesar to divide the kingdom and to put Archelaus on the throne as ethnarch, or a ruler with less power than a king.

When Archelaus returned, he took fierce revenge upon those who had opposed him and rewarded his faithful adherents most liberally. This story of what had been done 30 years before would, no doubt, rise up in the recollection of the people when Jesus spoke, for Archelaus had built a palace for himself very near to Jericho—and it may be that under the walls of that palace the Savior used the event as the basis of His parable. Those who lived in our Lord's day must have understood His allusions to current facts much better than we do who live 19 centuries later. The Providence of God provided that observant Jew, Josephus, to store up much valuable information for us. Read the passage in his history and you will see that even the details tally with this parable. There is the story.

The Savior, without excusing Archelaus or commending him in the least degree, simply makes his going to Rome an illustration. Here is a noble personage who is to be a king, but to obtain the throne he must journey to the distant court of a superior power. While he is going, his citizens, who hate him so, send an embassage to oppose his claims, for they will not have him for their king. However, he receives the kingdom and returns to rule it. When he does so, he rewards those who have been faithful to him and he punishes with overwhelming destruction those who have tried to prevent his reigning. There is the story—let me further interpret it.

The Savior likens Himself to a nobleman. He was here on earth a Man among men and truly a Nobleman in the midst of His fellow citizens! It was His to become king, king of all the earth! Indeed, He is such by Nature and by right, but He must first go, by death, resurrection and ascension, away to the highest courts and there, from the great Lord of All, He must receive for Himself a Kingdom. It is written, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance." And therefore Jesus must plead His claims before the King and win His suit. The day is coming when He will return, clothed with glory and honor, to take unto Himself His great power and reign, for He must reign till all enemies are put under His feet. When He comes, His enemies will be destroyed and His faithful servants will be abundantly rewarded.

Let us now draw near to this feast of Divine teaching! May the Spirit of God help us to gather practical lessons from this parable!

I. First, I invite you to notice that THERE ARE HERE TWO SETS OF PERSONS. We see the enemies who would not have this man to reign over them and the servants who had to trade with his money. There are many divisions among men into nationalities, ranks, offices and characters,

but, after all, the deep divisions will always be two—the enemies and the servants of Christ Jesus. You that are not servants, are enemies! You that are not enemies must take care that you are servants. I find no class of persons mentioned in the parable but these two and I feel certain that there are no others on the face of the earth. You are all either enemies or servants of Jesus Christ!

Consider the enemies! The person hated was a nobleman. He was a man, but a noble man. What a Man is the Lord Jesus! Forgetting His Godhead for the moment, regard Him only as the Man, Christ Jesus, and what a Man! I need not dwell upon the nobility of His birth, of the seed of David. But I would remind you of the nobility of His Character, for that is where true nobility resides. In this respect, where is there nobility to be compared to His? Brothers, it would be difficult to find a second to the Man, Christ, within measurable distance of Him—even those who copy Him most nearly confess, regretfully, that in many things they fall short of His Glory. There was nothing petty, mean, or selfish about Jesus of Nazareth. He was altogether the noble Man!

He deigned, for gracious purposes, to become a Citizen among others, for since we read of His being anointed above His fellows, it is implied that some were His fellows. He was a Man among men! He was of the society of carpenters! He was also free of the company of itinerant preachers. He associated with men of the sea, with men that handled the net and the oar. He went in and out among the peasantry and in His dress and style of living there was nothing to distinguish Him from the rest of the citizens. Truly, He was separate from them by His holier Character, but the separation was not caused by His unwillingness to come down to them, but by their inability to go up to Him!

The citizens hated Him and they hated Him without cause. There is always some cause for dislike in us, but there was none in Him. In tone, or manner, or spirit, the best give some cause of offense—but in Him there was nothing which could excuse their hate—it was a wanton rejection of the fittest to reign.

As He claimed to be the King of the Jews, they especially hated His royalty, saying, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." And again, "We have no king but Caesar." "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, merely regarding Jesus as a Man, if we wanted a king, He ought to be elected by the universal suffrages of mankind—openly given by uplifted hands and joyful acclamations, Io triumphe! Mighty Conqueror, reign forever! Prince of the kings of the earth, lover of the sons of men, who did, for our sake, pour out Your precious blood, You deserve to be King of all! The most kingly of men should be king of men. Yet they hated His royal claims and this, also, without cause. Which of them had He oppressed? What revenue did He extort from the people? What Law of His was hard or cruel? In what case did He ever judge unrighteously? Yet His citizens hated Him! There is that same hate of Christ in the world today. Do any of you hate Him? "No," you say. Yet are not some of you who do not oppose Him, treating Him with greater contempt than if you did oppose Him? You pass Him by altogether! He is not in all your thoughts! You act as if He were not worthy, even, to be opposed—you make nothing of Him! He is not among the objects for which you live. Sometimes you may speak with a partial admiration of His Character, but earnest admiration leads to imitation. If Jesus is a Savior, what worse can you do to Him than to refuse to be saved by Him? I charge you indifferent ones with being, in the core of your hearts, His worst enemies! Oh that you would repent of this and turn to Him, for He is coming again and when He comes, He will say, "As for these, My enemies, slay

them before My eyes." The expression is full of terror! To be slain before the eyes of injured love is doubly death! The Lord, by His Grace, deliver us from so dread a doom!

The other set of persons in the parable were his servants—the original would justify the translation, his bond-servants. Those who were not his enemies were his faithful servants. I suppose that the nobleman had bought them with his money, or that they had been born in his house, or that they had willingly bound themselves by indentures to him. When I said that these were only his slaves, you inwardly said, "Then you that believe in Jesus are His bond-servants." Spare us not even the harsher word, "slaves!" We were never free till we came under bonds to Jesus—and we grow in freedom as we yield to Him! Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," as if the hot iron of affliction had branded him with the name of Christ!

Yes, we are the property of the Lord Jesus and not our own! We cannot, somehow, find words which will, in all their fullness express our belonging to Jesus—we wish to sink into Christ and to become as nothing for His sake. Truly He has called us friends, but we call ourselves His servants. We take a great delight in acknowledging Him as Master. like David, who said, "I am Your servant," and then again, "I am Your servant," and then again, "and the son of Your handmaid." He was born a servant, born of a mother who was also, herself, a servant. After all this, he added, "You have loosed my bonds." Servitude to Christ is perfect freedom and, in every respect, we have found it so! We never expect to know perfect freedom until He has brought every thought, every conception, imagination and desire into captivity to Himself! We have been bought with His money and we cost Him dearly. We have also been born in His house by a second birth and we are bound to Him by indentures which we have gladly signed and sealed—and are ready to sign and seal again—

"High Heaven that heard the solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear! Till in life's latest hour we bow, And bless in death a bond so dear."

Thus we are truly on the opposite side of His enemies, for we are willingly His servants!

I have thus introduced to you the two classes. Before we go any further, may the Holy Spirit operate upon us to make us discern to which of these two we belong! If we are enemies, may we become servants from this time forth!

II. We now advance a step further and notice THE ENGAGEMENTS OF THESE SERVANTS. Their lord was going away and he left his 10 servants in charge with a little capital with which they were to "do business," or trade for him till he returned. He did not tell them how long he would be away, perhaps he did not know, himself—I mean the king in the story— but even our Master says, "Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of Heaven." "I am going away," the nobleman said, "you are my servants and I leave you as my servants in the midst of my enemies. Be loyal to me and, to prove your faithfulness, continue to trade in my name. I shall entrust to each of you a very small sum of money, but it will keep you occupied and your trading on my account will be your daily acknowledgment that you are loyal to me, whatever others may be."

Notice, first, that this was honorable work. They were not entrusted with large funds, but the amount was enough to serve as a test. It put them upon their honor. If they were really attached to their master, they would feel that he had placed a confidence in them which they must justify. Slaves are not always to be entrusted with money. In fact, the tendency of bondage has always

been to take away from men the quality of trustworthiness—our bondage to Christ has the opposite effect because it is no bondage at all! These servants of the master were treated in some respect as partners, they were to have fellowship with him in his property. They were his confidants and trustees. His eyes were not watching them, for he had gone into a far country and he trusted them to be a law unto themselves. They were not to render a daily account, but to be left alone until he returned.

Now that is just how the Master has treated us! He has put us in trust with the Gospel and He relies upon our honor. He does not call us at once to an audit, for He is not here. I do not think that systems of Church government which involve a measure of the spy system are at all after our Lord's mind. If Christians are what they ought to be, they can be trusted—they are a law unto themselves. The Lord puts you not under certain rules and regulations so as to ordain that you shall give a tenth, though I wish you did give that much at least. He does not say, "You shall subscribe so much at such a time and work in such a way." No—you are not under Law, but under Grace. If you love your Master, you will soon discover what to do for Him and you will do it with delight!

The nobleman does not lay down rigid rules and order that at such an hour in the morning the servants must begin work—and that they must work on for so many hours. No. He says, "Take my pound and trade with it." Our version, "Do business till I come," is a lumbering Latin way of saying, "Trade with it till I come." And our Lord has put us on the same footing of confidence, appealing to our honor and love. He will not come and look after us today or tomorrow, though He will ultimately have a strict reckoning with us. Meanwhile He has gone, but He has left us here in the midst of His enemies—to show His enemies that He has some friends— and that He must be a good Master since even those who acknowledge themselves to be His vassals, rejoice to spend their whole lives in His service!

It was work for which the nobleman gave them capital. He gave to each of them a pound. "Not much," you will say. No, he did not intend it to be much. They were not capable of managing very much. If he found them faithful in "a very little," he could then raise them to a higher responsibility. I do not read that any of them complained of the smallness of his capital, or wished to have it doubled.

Brothers and Sisters, we need not ask for more talents—we have quite as many as we shall be able to answer for. Preachers need not seek for larger spheres—let them be faithful in those which they now occupy. A Brother recently said to me, "I cannot do much with a hundred hearers," and I replied, "You will find it hard work to give in a good account for even a hundred people." I confess it very quietly, but I have often wished that I had a little congregation, that I might watch over every soul in it. But now I am doomed to an everlasting dissatisfaction with my work, for what am I among so many? I can only feel that I have not even begun to do the hundredth part of what needs to be done in such a Church as this!

Each one had a pound in his hand and his lord only said, "Do business till I come." He did not expect them to do a wholesale business on so small a stock, but they were to trade as the market would allow. He did not expect them to make more than the pound would fairly bring in, for, after all, he was not "an austere man." "Take that pound," he said, "and do your best. I know the times are bad, for you have to trade among enemies. You could not, perhaps, manage to put out 20

pounds under such circumstances, but you can turn over a pound and use every shilling of it." Thus he gave them a sufficient capital for his purpose.

My friend, have you that pound anywhere about you? "Alas," says one, "I have no abilities at all." How is that? Your Lord gave you a pound—what has become of it? You are one of His servants and if you are doing nothing, you are in an evil case and ought to be ashamed. What have you done with that pound? Put your hand in your pocket. It is not there. Is it in the napkin?—that napkin with which you ought to have wiped the sweat of labor from your brow? Have you got that pound? You say, "It is not much." The Master did not say it was much, on the contrary, He called it, "very little." But have you used that very little? This should go home to your consciences! You have been treated as confidential servants and yet you are not true to your Lord. Why is this?

What they had to do with the pound was prescribed in general terms. They were to trade with it, not to play with it. I dare say they were inclined to argue, "Our master's cause is assailed, let us fight for him," yet he did not say, "fight," but trade! Peter drew his sword. Oh, yes, we are eager combatants, but slow merchants! Many manifest a defiant spirit and are never more satisfied than when they are in noise and strife. The servants in this parable were not to fight, but to trade, which is a much more coolblooded and ignoble thing in common esteem. We may leave our Lord's enemies to Himself—He will end their rebellions one of these days. We are to follow a much lowlier line of things. No doubt certain of them might have thought that the pound would be useful to purchase them comforts, or even luxuries—one would buy a new coat and another would bring home a piece of furniture for his house— and others would solemnly say, "We have our families to think of." Yes, but their lord did not say so! The master said, "Do business till I come." They were neither to fight with it, nor hoard it, nor spend it, nor waste it, but to trade with it for him. The pound was not put into their hands for display. They were not to glory over others who had not so much as a penny to bless themselves with, for though they were little capitalists, that capital was their lord's!

It is a pity when Graces or talents are boasted of as if they were our own. A tradesman who is prospering seldom has much money to show—it is all needed in his business. Sometimes he can scarcely put his hand upon a five-pound note because his cash is all absorbed—his golden grain is all sown in the field of his trade. Speaking for myself, I cannot find any room for glorying in myself, for if I have either Grace or strength, I certainly have none to spare! I have barely enough for the work in hand and not enough for the service in prospect. Our pound is not to be hung on our watch-chain, but to be traded with!

Trading represents a life which may be called commonplace, but it is eminently practical—and it has an exceedingly practical effect upon the person engaged in it. This is owing in part to the fact that it is an occupation in which there is great scope for judgment. They were not tied down to a special kind of trade. The man who made his one pound into 10 chose the best form of business. He sought not that which was most pleasant, but that which was most profitable. So you are left, dear Friends, to choose your own line of service for your Master—only you must trade for Him and for Him everything must be done well. At the present time no trading pays better than the mission to the Congo, or to the hill-tribes of India—large dividends come, also, from dealings with the poorest of the poor in the slums and as much from widows and orphans who are in extreme destitution. When men have to lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus, after a life languished away

with fever, the returns are amazing! Where the need is greatest, our Lord receives most glory. It is left to you to judge what you can do, how you can do it and where you will do it. Do that which will most surely win souls and that which will best establish your Lord's Kingdom. Exercise your very best judgment and get into that line of holy service in which you can bring in the largest revenue for your glorious Master.

The work which the nobleman prescribed was one that would bring them out. The man who never succeeds in trade, do you know him? I know him. He complains that he has a small head and usually the complaint is founded on fact. He needs to follow a business in which the bread and butter will be brought to his door ready spread and even then, unless it is cut up into dice pieces on his plate, he will get no breakfast. The man that is to succeed in trade in these times must have confidence, look alive, keep his eyes open and be all there. Our times are hard, but not so hard as those described in the parable when the faithful servants were trading in the midst of traitors—they had need of sharp wits. Trade develops a man's perseverance, patience and courage. It tests honesty, truthfulness and firmness. It is a singularly excellent discipline for character.

When this nobleman gave his servant the pound, it was that the servant might see what stuff he was made of. Trade with small capital means personal work and drudgery, long hours and few holidays—plenty of disappointment and small gains. It means working with might and main and doing the thing with all your heart and mind. In such a manner are we to serve Christ. The word, "trade," has a world of meaning in it. I cannot bring it out this morning, but there is no need, for the most of you know more about trade than I do and you can instruct yourselves. You are to trade for the Lord Jesus Christ in a higher and yet more emphatic sense than that in which you have traded for yourselves. With your physical strength, your mental faculties, your substance, your family—with everything—you are to bring glory to God and honor to the name of Jesus! It is to be your life-business to work for Jesus and with Jesus.

Trading, if it is successfully carried on, is an engrossing concern, calling out the whole man. It is a continuous toil, a varied trial, a remarkable test, a valuable discipline—and this is why the nobleman put his bondsmen to it, that he might afterwards use them in still higher service. Brothers and Sisters, learn what is meant by trading and then carry on a spiritual trade with all your heart.

At the same time, let us notice that it was work suitable to their capacity. Small as the capital was, it was enough for them, for they were no more than bondsmen, not of a high grade of rank or education. Their master gave them only a pound, which did not mean more than £3 10s of our money. One could not get a large shop, or even a decent stock with that small amount. They could not complain that they were placed in a business which was too heavy for them to manage. They could, any of them, buy a few goods and hawk them. The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask you to do more than you can do. He does not break you down with cares beyond your capacity. We have not yet reached the limit of our powers—we can yet do more. Jesus is no exacting master. It is only a false and lying servant who will call Him "an austere Man, reaping where He has not sowed." Nothing of the kind! He has given us a light business— our work for Him is suited to our limited powers and He is ready, by His Holy Spirit, to assist us. Let us use well our single pound. Let it be our ambition to make 10 of it, at the very least, and may the Lord graciously prosper our endeavors, that we may have large interest to present to Him when He shall come!

Did you enquire as to how these men were to be supported? Their master did not tell them to live off his pound. No, they were his servants and so they lived under his roof—and he provided for all their needs. He had gone on a journey, but his establishment was not given up—the table was still spread and the children and the servants had bread enough and to spare. "Oh," says one, "that alters the case!" Just so, but it does not make it different from yours, or, if it does, I am sorry for you. Are you your own provider? Do you cry, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink?" Do you not know that all these things do the nations of the earth seek after? Whereas Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." As I understand my life, I am to do my Lord's work and He is to provide for me. He may do this through my own industry, but still it is His work to do it—not mine! If the Providence of God is not sufficient to provide for us, then I am sure we cannot provide for ourselves! And if it is sufficient, we shall be wise to cast all our care on the Lord and live undividedly for His praise! Remember that text, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." You, as a servant, are not to be entangled with carking cares about your own interests, but you are to give your whole thought and life to your Master's service. He will take care of you, now, and reward you when He shall come.

III. Thirdly, to understand this parable, we must remember THE EXPECTANCY WHICH WAS ALWAYS TO INFLUENCE THEM. They were left as trusted servants till he should return, but that return was a Mal. item in the matter.

They were to believe that he would return and that he would return a king. The citizens did not believe it. They hoped that Caesar would refuse him the throne, but we are to be sure that our noble Master will receive the Kingdom. This rebel world does not believe that Jesus will ever be King. The other day we read of the "Eclipse of Christianity." Constantly we see His dominion assailed. They say that it is practically disproved by facts. Is it? Sirs, excuse me, I am desperately prejudiced, for I am His servant! I owe Him my life, my all! I am persuaded that He is and must be King of kings! I know Him so well that I am sure that He will prevail at the court to which He has gone. He is in very high favor there. The last time I saw the face of the great King, I obtained that favor through the use of His name. I receive anything I ask for when I mention His name and so I am sure that He is in wonderful high repute above. Why, His Father is the Sovereign! I am sure He will not deny the kingdom to His only-begotten Son! Jesus will come in His Kingdom—I am sure of it! Let us work in the full conviction that our absent Lord will soon be here, again, with a glorious diadem upon His brow. When He went away, He took with Him the scars of one who died a felon's death—and He will come again with them, but the nail prints will be no memorials of His shame—they will be as jewels to His hands!

The nobleman's servants were to regard their absent master as already king and they were so to trade among his enemies that they should never compromise their own loyalty. They were of the king's party and of no other. It is a very awkward position to be in—to trade among people that are enemies to your king! You need, in such a case, to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. This is precisely our position! We have to bring glory to God out of men who hate Him! We have to magnify our Lord among men who would, if they could, crucify Him again! We have to go in and out among them in such a manner that they can never say that we side with them in their rebellion, or wink at their disloyalty! We cannot be, "Hail fellow: well met!" with those whose life is a practical insult to the crown rights of King Jesus! We must, above all things, prove ourselves loyal to our

absent Lord lest He appoint us our portion among His enemies.

I find that the original would suggest to anyone carefully reading it, that they were to regard their master as already returning. This should be our view of our Lord's Advent—He is even now on His way here! No sooner had He risen from the grave than, practically, our Lord was coming back! Strange paradox! But His ascension into Heaven was, in a certain sense, part of His coming back to us, for the way for Him, from the Cross on earth to the crown of the whole earth, was via the New Jerusalem. He is coming, now, as fast as Wisdom judges it to be right. I am sure our Savior will not delay a moment beyond what is absolutely necessary, for He loves the Church which is His bride—and as her Bridegroom, He will not delay the long-expected hour of their meeting—never to part again. He is ready—it is the bride that needs to make herself ready! Jesus desires to come! His heart is responsive to our cry when we say, "Come quickly!" He will come sooner than we think. We are bound to feel that He is, at this moment, on the road, and we are to live as if He might arrive at any moment!

We must trade on till our Lord has come. There must be no retiring from His business, even if we retire from our own. There must be no ceasing because we fancy we have done enough. Our rest will be when He comes! But till then, we must trade on.

Let us labor as in His actual Presence. How would you act with Jesus at your elbow? Act just so. He sees us as clearly as if His bodily Presence were in our midst. Be awakened and inspired by the Redeemer's eyes. Thus will you live in this trial state after the best possible manner.

IV. Now comes the sweet part of the subject. Note well THE SECRET DESIGN OF THE LORD. Did it ever strike you that this nobleman had a very kindly design towards his servants? Did this nobleman give these men one pound each with the sole design that they should make money for him? It would be absurd to think so! A few pounds would be no item to one who was made a king. No, no! It was as Mr. Bruce says, "He was not money-making, but character-making." His design was not to gain by them, but to educate them!

First, their being entrusted with a pound each was a test. This nobleman said to himself, "When I am a king, I must have faithful servants in power around me. My going away gives me an opportunity of seeing what my servants are made of. I shall thus test their capacity and their industry, their honesty and their zeal. If they prove faithful over a few things, they will be fit to be trusted with greater matters." The test was only a pound and they could not make much mischief out of that, but it would be quite sufficient to try their capacity and fidelity, for he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful, also, in much. They did not all endure the test, but by its means he revealed their characters.

It was also a preparation of them for future service. He would lift them up from being servants to become rulers! They were, therefore, to be put in a place of measurable responsibility and to be made men of thereby. They were to be rulers over a very little—say a pound and that which came of it—and this would be an education for them. In the process of trading, they would be in training to rule. The best way to learn to be a master is to be first a servant! And the reason why some masters are hard and tyrannical is because they do not know the heart of a servant by experience. They know nothing of service and so they have not the wisdom, the generosity and the tenderness which masters should show towards servants. So this nobleman was wise—he was at the same

time testing and training his men.

Besides this, I think he was giving them a little anticipation of their future honors. He was about to make them rulers over cities and so he first made them rulers over pounds. They had been servants and taken orders from him every morning, but now they have no master to go to and must use their own discretion. They were, in effect, in a small sphere, made into little kings. In all that country the citizens had rebelled, but there was a little kingdom of the nobleman's own servants—and these obeyed him and did their best to maintain his interest in their little way. They were already made free, placed in a measure of authority and made to know the sweets and the burdens of personal responsibility.

Oh, you who work for God, when you are overseers of others for Him— when you win souls for Him and when you conquer adversaries in His name—you are already anticipating your eternal reward! We are fashioning our future position upon the anvil of our lives, for Heaven, though it is a state and a place prepared for us by the Lord Jesus, lies also mainly in character. The man is more the source of joy than the streets of gold in which he will walk. If you hide your pound and neglect your Master's service here, you are making for yourselves a dim and hazy future in that grand millennial reign of His! You that addict yourselves to your holy trade and consecrate yourselves entirely to your Lord shall have large honors when He comes to reign gloriously among His ancients!

For see, when the nobleman came to the man who had earned 10 pounds, he gave him 10 cities. Think of that! There is no proportion between the poor service and the rich reward! A pound is rewarded with a city! Their master was not bound to pay them anything—they were his bond-servants but what he gave them was of his overflowing generosity! I do not think that he who brought five pounds was in the least blamed. He may have been just as diligent as the other, but he had less capacity. But how he must have opened his eyes when his master gave him five cities! Perhaps he wondered more than the first. Fancy if any one of us had been put to trade with a pound upon commission and had received five cities for reward! The money earned would not buy the smallest house and yet it brings in to the worker five cities! What surprise filled the heart of the recipient of such bounty! It never entered into his heart to envy the brother who had 10 cities, for the five were so vast a recompense. He must have been carried away with rapture with the prospect before him!

Though there may be degrees of glory, the only difference will be in the capacity of the blessed to contain it. All the vessels will be full, but they will not be all equally large—the man of the 10 pounds will simply be a larger vessel, full to the brim—the man with the five will be less capacious, but quite as full, to his own glad amazement and joyful bewilderment! However, let us go in for winning the 10 pounds if we can! For our Lord's sake, let us trade in spiritual things with all our hearts.

"But," says one, "where and what will these cities be?" It may be that all this will literally happen during the millennial period, but I do not know. When Christ shall come, the dead in Christ will rise first and we read that, "the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." There may be space during that era for all the special rewards of the Gospel dispensation. It may also be, but I do not know, and so I cannot tell you, that we are, in future dispensations, to fill unto other worlds much the same office as angels fill to ours. Jesus has made us kings and

priests—and we are in training for our thrones. What if in this congregation I am learning to proclaim my Master's Glory to myriads of worlds! Possibly the preacher who is faithful here may yet be made to tell forth His Lord's Glory to constellations at a later time. What if one might stand upon a central star and preach Christ to worlds on worlds instead of preaching Him to these two galleries and to this area! Why not?

At any rate, if I should ever gain a voice loud enough to be heard for millions of miles, I would speak none other than those glorious Truths of God which the Lord has revealed in Christ Jesus! If we are faithful here, we may expect our Master to entrust us with higher service hereafter! Only let us see to it that we are able to endure the test and that we profit by the training. As our account comes out in the very little, so will it be with us on the grand scale of eternity. This puts another face upon the work of this lower sphere. Rulers over 10 cities! Rulers over five cities! Brothers and Sisters, you are not fit for such dignities if you cannot serve your Lord well in this world with the little He has entrusted to you. If you live wholly to Him here, you will be prepared for the glories unspeakable which await all consecrated souls. Let us go in for a devoted life at once! Time is so short and the things we deal with are comparatively so small! We are soon coming out of the eggshell of time—and when we break loose into eternity and see the vastness of the Divine purposes, we shall be altogether amazed at the service bestowed—which will be the reward of service done. O Lord, make us faithful! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 19:1-38.

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Chapter 9

Luke 19,28 #3545 - Our Glorious Leader

OUR GLORIOUS LEADER

NO. 3545

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1917.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, JANUARY 4, 1872.

"And when He had thus spoken, He went on

ahead, ascending up to Jerusalem."

Luke 19:28.

A VERY beautiful spectacle it is to see the Lord Jesus marching in front and His followers eagerly following on behind. They were going up to Jerusalem, where it is true, He would receive some honor, but also where He would be betrayed into the hands of cruel men and put to a shameful death—but He went on ahead of them. As the shepherd goes before the sheep, not driving, but leading. As the captain goes before his soldiers as taking the post of danger, so our Lord went on before them. It was far better that He should go first than that they should, for the disciple is never more out of place than when he outruns his Master. If he will follow his Master's commands, he shall do well. But if he shall follow his own devices and invent his own way, he shall do badly. The pilgrimage behind the cloud is a safe one, but a rush before the cloud will end in a disaster. The Master must go first, not the disciple. But then, when the Master advances, it is right to see the disciple follow, ready of foot, quick at his Master's heel, delighted with his Master's company. One likes to think of that journey up to Jerusalem, with Jesus Christ just a little ahead in the front, and His disciples closely following Him. I thought it was a picture that might serve us as a model throughout the whole year. I am not going to talk to you long at this time, but wish just to sketch that picture before your mind's eyes and say, " So be it unto each one of us." May Jesus be with us. May Jesus lead the way. And may His own Divine Spirit give us Grace to follow Him—not like Peter, afar off—but as loving disciples who keep closely under their Master's guidance! From the beginning of the year to the end of the year may we rejoice to feel that He goes ahead of us, but may we also, with cheerful willingness, follow close behind! I present it to you, I say, as the picture for this New Year of Grace, and may it be verified in your experience.

Very simply, then, I shall try to call attention to the blessed fact that Jesus goes ahead of us and, having done so, I shall ask you, in the second place, to seek after a sweet sensation of this Truth of God. And the first Truth, then, to consider is—

I. THE BLESSED FACT—He went ahead of them. We have already said that He was going the way of suffering. He was going up to Jerusalem to suffer. When you are in the way of suffering, He will go before you. He was always in the way of service. There was more to be done at Jerusalem before He had finished His course. May we, in the way of service, always find Him going before us. And He was also, in the third place, on the way to death—and if we have any fears about our passage through the river, may this console us—He went before us!

To begin, then, at the beginning, here is the blessed fact that Christ has gone ahead of us in the way of suffering. He has done so by His own actual experience while He was here in the flesh. "He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." "In all our afflictions He was afflicted." "He Himself took our sicknesses and carried our sorrows." Rest assured that in whatever way of suffering you have to go in consequence of your being a child of man, and especially in consequence of your being a child of God, you will find that Christ has gone that way ahead of you! Are you full of bodily pain, stretched upon the bed? Are you apt to think that none ever suffered as you do? He suffered more than you! He went ahead of you along that flinty pathway. The pangs of His death must have been extreme. And remember His Passion in the Garden, His agony in Gethsemane. You have not in this matter yet come to having drops of blood oozing in sweat from your countenance. No, He has gone ahead of you there. In all the pangs of your bodily frame, Jesus has preceded you. Read the 22nd Psalm, with all its wonderful expressions—"I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint." "You have brought Me into the dust of death." He knew the fever and its thirst upon the Cross when He was dying there. He said, "You have brought Me to the dust of death." You have not one suffering that may be imagined to be more exquisite than what He endured! Your griefs are molehills compared with the Alps of His sufferings!

But you will say that it is not exactly the pathway of personal bodily pain you are traversing, but you have endured much in the sufferings of others you have lost. You have had half your heart, perhaps, taken away at one time. Friend after friend has been carried to the tomb! But He went ahead of you in this pathway, also. Did you never read where it is written, "Jesus wept?" "Behold how He loved him," said the Jews, as they beheld Him at the sepulcher of the most-beloved Lazarus. He knows what bereavements means as well as you—He has ahead of you. "Ah" you say, "but in consequence of the bereavement I have suffered, I am left a widow. How shall I be provided for? In addition to the woe of the loss, I have to look forward to the future! Will these hands be able to find me daily bread? My garments may become, by degrees, more and more thin and time-worn. I fear cold, nakedness and hunger." And suppose it should come to that, as it will not, I trust, yet He went ahead of you! You are not so poor as He. Hear His voice tonight, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head." To pay the common tax, He must borrow money from the fish of the sea. His garment was the common seamless robe of peasants. He was but poorly clad—He was in all respects the child of poverty. First cradled in a manger, and then laid for His last sleep in a borrowed grave, for still He had not where to lay His head. In the sleep of death, Jesus went ahead of you! O son of poverty, O daughter of need, you may see the print of His footsteps all along that thorny way!

"Yes," says one, "but still there is added to poverty in my case the fact that I have been forsaken by friends, and I am very fearful that even those who stood somewhat faithful to me will soon grow weary, and I shall be left alone." And did you never hear Him say, "And I shall be left alone, and

yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me"? And have you never read how they all forsook Him and fled, and Peter denied Him with oaths and curses and, worst of all, Judas, who had been trusted with His little stock, sold Him for the price of a slave? "He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me." Ingratitude most cruel, treachery most base! Your Lord has suffered it! You may see the prints of His pierced feet along that pathway if you will but look for them. Jesus went ahead of you in actual suffering. And what if you have been serving your Lord with zeal and fervor, and you have been reproached, even by those who love Him? You have met with the cold shoulder where you expected to find encouragement. If your motives have been misrepresented by the very persons who ought to have supported you in your ardor, ah, what then? Was not He also a reproach among His mother's brethren? When His zeal had eaten Him up, they said that He was mad—and even His mother and His brethren stood outside desiring that they might see Him because they thought Him bereaved of His wits! And if the wicked world has reproached you, did they not call the Master of the house, "Beelzebub"? Shall they have soft names and honorable titles for the men of His household? If they said of Him, "He has a devil, and is mad, why listen to Him?" do you think they will say great and flattering things of you? O you that are made ashamed for His sake, and made a spectacle unto men and unto angels, be not afraid! No strange thing has happened to you! Thousands of saints have passed along this road and, chief of all, your Master, Christ, has gone ahead of you! In the path of suffering, then, Jesus has gone ahead of us from the fact of having actually and literally experienced what we suffer!

He has gone before in another sense, namely, that now, though He reigns exalted high in the highest heavens, He still goes ahead of us in the intense sympathy of His sacred heart. Jesus is not separated from His people by the mere fact of distance. "Lo," He has said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world," and you know what mysterious, yet real union exists between Christ, the Head, and all His members. It came out clearly in the case of Paul, when Jesus said to Him, "Why do you persecute Me?" He was persecuting only a few poor people in Jerusalem, or in Damascus, whom he despised, but Christ said, "Why do you perse

Volume 63 3cute Me?" because persecuting the saints was persecuting Christ! Christ suffering in His members. Christ suffering on the Cross was the Head suffering, but when His people were torn to pieces in the amphitheatre, when they were burned tat Smithfield, and when, today, they are hooted and made a jest of, it is Christ suffering—still suffering in His members— and when any child of God suffers in any righteous cause, whenever affliction comes upon a saint in any form, Christ sympathizes with him. Rest assured—

"In every pang that rends the heart, The Man of Sorrows bears His part."

In all their affliction He was afflicted. A finger never suffers without the brain participating—and no humble member of the true Church of Christ ever suffers without Christ, the glorious Head, suffering in sympathy therewith.

Now this is very cheering to those who have faith to receive it, because very much of the heart-breaking that comes into the world is from a sense of loneliness. When men feel that somebody sympathizes with them. When those who are being beaten feel that others smart as they do, then they take courage. Oh, there is One who loves you more than you can love yourself, who sympathizes with you, you suffering saint, from the Throne of His Glory! Be you, therefore, glad! Be of good courage and let this comfort your heart!

There is a third way in which Christ goes ahead of us in the path of suffering—that is, in the matter of Providence. While He has Himself suffered, and sympathizes, in a third respect He always goes ahead of us in our sufferings, in preparing them for us, and preparing us for them. Our Lord has gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us—and I believe He has prepared all the road as well as a place at the end of it. You shall find, O child of God, when you come into the deep waters, that Christ is there— there by His Grace and Spirit, and there, also, by His Providence, to take care of you. It was appointed that Jacob and his tribes should all go down to Egypt. To Egypt they must go, but Joseph went down there before them and became lord over all Egypt—not for his own sake, but for the sake of his brothers, for all the wealth of Egypt shall be used, if necessary, in order that Jacob and all his household shall be preserved during the time of famine! Now if there is an Egypt to which you are to go, Jesus, your Joseph, has gone before you to make it ready for you, to find you a Goshen and to nourish you there till such day as you shall come from it. God, even your Savior, Jesus, leads the van! As the cloud, like a mighty banner of fire, went through all the mazes of the winding way of Israel over the desert, so Jesus marches before us, the Leader, the Standard-Bearer among ten thousand, always in the front and with His eternal power and Godhead making straight the pathway for His people's feet! Let us be of good courage, then, in this respect. In the matter of suffering, He went ahead of you. But now realize here the retrospect. If He goes ahead of you, then follow Him. You love not suffering. It were not suffering if you did love it, but still, if Jesus leads, look not to the way. It were better that that way should be full of thorns and briars which would tear your flesh, and Christ be with you, than that it should be a long green pathway, and your Shepherd lead you not! Go on! He went to His sufferings without a murmur. Moreover, even His flesh shrank and, at last, He said, "Not My will, but Yours be done." Say you, the same. Dot you fear as you enter into the cloud? Within that cloud shall be the secret tabernacle of the Most High, wherein He will reveal Himself to you as He never did before! Some of us owe much to the anvil and the hammer, and the fire, much to suffering, much to trials—and we thank God we had them! And you will yet have to do the same, but, oh, stay not back! Remember, after all, a lack of resignation will not assist you in your suffering, but, on the contrary, nothing makes suffering so light as resignation to it—and a perfect acquiescence in the Divine Will does much to take away the gall from the cup! You must go where Jesus leads—go, therefore, willingly, cheerfully, trustingly and even joyfully, for it is a triumph to a Christian to bear the cross after Jesus—and to be crucified and buried with Him were a high honor to any child of God. Go on, then, for Christ leads the way!

But now I must not tarry so long on that part, but I observe it is said Christ leads the way in service as well as in suffering. He was going up to Jerusalem to accomplish the rest of His life-work before He surrendered His Spirit to His Father. Now you and I, and each of us, have a service to perform. We were redeemed and with a price that we might serve the Lord. We are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. We have a priesthood to fulfill. All God's children, all God's servants are priest and kings, and they have a rule to discharge, and a priesthood to fulfill. Now we are beginning a new year of service. It will be a very sweet thing to us if we can know that Jesus Christ has gone ahead of us in the path of service. Beloved, I might take the same Truth of God and say that He has actually gone before us in having fulfilled the same service. If there is any good thing for you to do, Christ has done it before you! Are we called to preach the Gospel? You know how He was anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor. Are you called to teach the little ones? Did not He say, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of

Heaven"? Have you to feed the hungry? On what a large scale did He do it! Have you to visit the sick and to minister to their needs? Oh, how many thousands owed their opened eyes or restored limbs to Him! Christ's life anticipates all the service of the Church. One might very easily, in taking the life of Christ, find all the operations of a truly active Church prefigured there—all of them. There is nothing new under the sun, and when a man has found something, and thought, "Here is something that is fresh," you shall find Christ has looked after the halt, the blind and the lame before you—and if you seek to raise the fallen

Volume 63 5woman, you will be made to remember Him who said, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." I should be afraid to undertake any service in which I could not see that He has gone before. What Christ has done, it is right for us to do, save only in that work of Expiation where we cannot help Him. There He treads the winepress alone, and of the people there is none with Him—but in all in which He is our Exemplar, it is always a safe thing for us to follow very closely—and we shall find that He has gone before us!

And truly He goes before us in all our works by His Holy Spirit actively proving His Divine sympathy still with us. I do not look upon the Church of God as so many pious men and women at work by themselves, but I see God working by them, working in them, working through them! They are the workers to the eye, but no further. It is God who works in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure! If Satan saw in the work only the man, he would laugh at him, but he perceives "the hand of Joab" is there—a mightier hand than the hand of man and, therefore, it is that he is often put to the rout. O you that speak for Jesus, that pray for Jesus, that give to His cause and work for His name, let this be your joy and your comfort—that Jesus Christ is with you and goes ahead of you in all this service!

And so He does in His Providence. If we had but eyes to see it, and could know all things, we would perceive that when we come to preach the Gospel, God has been preparing men's hearts to receive it. Many a time a man will come up to the House of Prayer, and he has a trouble that has been plowing up and down, and the minister has got a handful of seed to sow, which the birds would have devoured if they had fallen on hard soil—only God has plowed the man and made him like soil, ready to receive it! He has gone ahead of us! If ever I see these benches full, I feel a little distressed, and yet elated, because I always reckon that I have got a picked congregation and each man is sent with a design. Though there may not be salvation in every case, yet there are some to whom God will bless the Word, to which the Word will be fitted to the very letter, for God will guide the preacher and oftentimes as much reveals Himself from the pulpit as ever a Nebuchadnezzar's dream was revealed again by Daniel when it was gone altogether from his mind. You shall be sure that God is in the Word if it comes home to you in that way! And if you are a Christian worker, you may expect that the Providence of God will prepare men's hearts for that work which you are trying to do!

I would that the Church of God would now recollect that assuredly God is going ahead of her in all her service at this moment. The world is prepared for the Gospel if we were but willing to present the Gospel to the world! When our Lord Christ came into this world there was a universal peace, and the peace of the public mind and the state of the public pulse was just suitable for the preaching of the Gospel by the Lord and by His Apostles—and there is some such suitability as that now. Chains that long have galled unhappy nations have been filed through. The people that

sat in darkness have seen a great light—they have demanded liberty and won it with a good right hand—and mean to hold it! And now is the time when the darkness flies and light comes for those who have the still brighter light of the everlasting Gospel of the ever blessed God to spring into the gap and proclaim salvation by a Crucified Redeemer to all the sons of men! Up, Churches of London, and to your work! Even now the very demand for education among you, and the stir that there is among the people, the breaking up of hoary systems of abomination, the motion and commotion—all this means good to you! You have been embedded in the ice and frozen up these long wintry days, but, lo, the sun has risen and the long summer days shall soon come and your boat shall be freighted and put out to sea—and bring a blessed cargo of souls home to God their Father! Let us be up and doing, for Jesus goes ahead of us in the matter of Providence. May He help us to keep always near Him. What He would have us do, oh, may we do it! Word for word what He would have us speak, thought for thought what He would have us think, act for act what He would have us do! Let us never have a glorious Leader and be a laggard people. Oh, for the Grace that is in Him to bedew us plenteously, that as He goes ahead of us we may follow Him in the path of service!

Now very briefly upon one other point, which was the path of death. Our Lord was going to Golgotha, and there was to be, as far as this world was concerned, the end of His journey. To the Cross He must be nailed, and in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, the Lord Jesus must sleep. Death is not a pleasant thing. It matters not how you gild the pill, it is a pill. If the Lord comes not, however, before that time we shall have to pass through death, and we shall find it, if we are His people, to be infinitely less painful than the fear of death! We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, and if our faith were greater, we would have no fear of death. "Ah," says one, "what I dread is parting, leaving my friends." He went before them—He parted from them all, and from His mother. And He said to John, "Behold, your mother," and to His mother," "Woman, behold your son," as the light faded from His eyes. He went ahead of us in the path of death. "Ah, but I cannot bear to think of the pain of dying," says one. You will never have such pain as His in death—He went ahead of you. He had a sense of sin in dying. He was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree," but no curse can ever light on you, Believer. The blessing is yours because the curse was His! Oh, He has gone ahead of you—He has gone where you shall never go, for He suffered the wrath of God, which you never shall suffer, for that wrath is gone and passed away forever! There are none of the surroundings of a dying bed which can suggest such horror as that which surrounded the death of our Lord—so that He has gone ahead of you in everything that might alarm you in the prospect of your departure. He has gone ahead of you. Be content to follow Him to the grave. It is no more—

Volume 63 7"A charnel-house of sense, Relics of lost innocence, The place of ruin and decay; The imprisoning stone is rolled away."

It is now a nest of sweetness since Jesus laid in it. The grave is no longer unfurnished—there are His grave clothes left for you and, moreover, the stone being rolled away, you have the promise that you shall come out of it again! When the trumpet of the archangel sounds, those poor bones shall arise and the body that was sown in weakness shall be raised in power! What joy it is, then, to think that He went ahead of us and how obediently, no, triumphantly, may we follow Him, even to death itself! Here, then, is the blessed fact, in suffering, or service, or departure, Christ goes ahead of us! Now the point we close with is this—

II. MAY WE, ALL OF US, HAVE A SWEET REALIZATION OF THIS TRUTH DURING THIS YEAR.

We believe a good deal of Doctrine which we have never yet realized. We know much to be food which we have never fed upon. Many Christians are like those who have sacks of flour in the house, but no bread. They have nothing available for present food. Some are like rich men that may happen to be abroad with thousands in gold, but no small silver, no spending money. May you be able to coin the bullion of precious promise so as to use it in the journey of life. May you make practical application of precious Truths of God, tasting the honey, drinking the wine and being satisfied with them. Now, then, to realize that Christ goes ahead of us is to realize that we are never alone. If I am in my study, and a problem staggers me, I am not alone—my Lord will teach me. You are in your little chamber with the needle, working hard for very scanty pay. You have to suffer—you have not got to suffer that alone. "I am with you when you pass through the fire; you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." But you have got to go into the workroom and there are those that point at you, and they have a jest for you, whom they know to be a follower of Christ. You have not to bear that alone! He has the heaviest end of that cross and He is persecuted in His persecuted members. But you are busy in business, and your cares afflict you. Blessed be God you have not got to bear those cares alone! No, nor yet at all, for concerning them He has said, "Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." I have got to come here and preach. Who is sufficient for these things? But I am not to preach alone—"My Grace is sufficient for you." His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. You have to go to that Sunday school class. Oh, how incorrigible those boys are and how careless those girls—but you have not got to win those souls alone—Jesus will go and His Spirit will be there, and you shall be helped in your work! Do try and realize all through this year that you are never alone. Not only is it, "You, God, see me," but it is this, "Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God." And Christ is not with you behind, or pushing you into the danger, but He is with you ahead of you—He goes ahead of you—He is the shield catching the fiery darts upon Himself! You shall come behind the screen and be sheltered by His precious promise.

I do not know where you may be this year, but let this thought abide with you—He will be with you! Perhaps you will cross the sea. Your lot may be to help to colonize some distant land. Over the sea and on the billows, and on the shore so strange to you—He will be your near Companion! Perhaps this year there is a trial awaiting you, very heavy, or perhaps a temptation arising out of some new joy or fresh prosperity. Do not fear it—you shall be safe on the hilltops of joy and in the Valley of Humiliation. He is with you anywhere! A child is told, perhaps at nightfall, that he has to go a considerable distance. It is to a lonely farmhouse and the little one trembles to go across the moor in the dark. "Oh," the mother says. "but Father is going with you." Oh, then that changes the aspect of everything! The boy is pleased to go! Even the dangers that seemed so great, only attract him now—he will be glad to be with his father. Through the moor land of another year, you have to go, and it may be dark and cold, but your heavenly Father and your blessed Elder Brother will be with you! Therefore, be not afraid. You will have to contend this year for "the faith delivered once for all to the saints," and to do much service, too. If you are to render a good account at the year's end, you are to try and live this year, not at a slow rate, like the cold-blooded frog, but to have hot blood in you! Regulated by prudence, and yet boiling over with a burning zeal, you are to serve the Lord! And it may be you think you cannot do it. Is anything impossible when He helps

you? Is any sacrifice impossible when it is for Him? Is any difficulty insurmountable when He, Himself, gives the all-sufficient strength? Oh, this is a very choice thought, though a very simple one, that Jesus will be with you all the year through!

The only other thought is, take care that you abide with Him. He is a quick walker. Idle souls will be left behind. He is a holy liver. Unclean spirits will find Him part company with them. Be you watchful, vigilant, sober, careful, zealous, and seek to have perpetual fellowship with Jesus Christ. I am sure those are the happiest that live nearest to God! I am certain of it. I do know it is not the wealthiest who are the happiest. It is not those who have the most health that are always happiest, and those who are most esteemed among their fellow men. There is one rule without any exception—he who lives nearest to God has the most of that profound peace of God which passes all understanding. He says to you, "Abide in Me." May His words abide in you! May you abide in Him and may this be to each one of you, and to this Church, the very happiest year we have ever had! Oh, that some poor sinner would seek the Savior! May the Lord's lovely attractions entice Him!

And I shall close by saying this—that if any soul longs for Christ, Christ is already longing for Him—and if you have a half of a desire towards

Volume 63 9Him, He has a heart full of desire towards you! There never was a soul that had a head start on Christ in the matter of desire for salvation. God grant you Grace to touch Jesus and then to follow after Him, and to make His blessing abide with you, both now and forever. Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Isaiah 35:1-10, Hebrews 12:1-6.

Verse 1. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them. They shall be so glad that they shall inspire gladness where all was desolation, brooding, melancholy and dragon's howls. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them."

1. And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. God's people are a happy-making people. They are a blessing in themselves and they shall be a blessing to others till all shall say, "These are the seed that the Lord has blessed." "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

2. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. A wonderful sight to see, for there is one of the most lovely sights in the world when the Glory and excellency of God are to be seen in the works of His Grace in His own people. It is such a sight that it makes men first rejoice in their hearts and then rejoice with their tongues. They shall "rejoice with joy and singing," which is the double rejoicing of the heart and of the lips. Well, these must be a favored people who, wherever they go, can make others glad after this fashion! Brothers and Sisters, they must be full or they could not overflow! They must be alive, or else they could not quicken the desert places. They must be in flower, blooming like the rose, or they could not make the wilderness so full of verdure. The Lord grant that we may be in that state, that we may be able to go into the wilderness. There are some of God's people that cannot trust

themselves to go where they are needed because they have not Divine Grace enough. They are so weak that they are like the weak man standing on the river's brink who cannot leap in to pull out a drowning man for fear he should be pulled in himself. But, oh, they are blessed, indeed, who dare go into the wildernesses and into the solitary places, and carry the transforming benediction of Heaven with them till the wilderness changes its dress—and the brown of the arid sand gives place to the ruddiness of the rose—because God has come there with His people!

3. Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Are there such here tonight? No doubt there are—weak at work and weak at praying. The two things go together—weak hands and feeble knees. May they both be strengthened!

4. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you. It is very singular how salvation and vengeance are so often associated together in Scripture. It is the day of salvation, "and the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all who mourn." Vengeance upon the false is the best consolation to the true! When God smites the sham, even to the heart, then does He bless those in which His Truth is found. "He will come and save you."

5, 6. 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. See what the Presence of Christ does? See what the presence of Christ's people will do when He comes in them and with them! They make the wilderness rejoice. But, besides that, the dwellers that are found in the wilderness—these lame and deaf people—get the blessing. Oh, may God make us to be a desert to others of this sort!

7. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. The greenest spots your eyes ever rested upon are just there where the grass is so rooted in the morass that it is always green with a delicate tinge, and the reeds and rushes spring up abundantly. O God, make poor parched hearts to become like this! You barren ones, you desolate ones—He can give you the best verdure that is possible! Your hearts shall be as green and fresh as the spots where there is grass with reeds and rushes.

8. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it: but it shall be for others: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. Oh, what a blessing that is to us poor fools! We could err anywhere. To err is human and we seem to have come in for a double share of it. The more we look at our lives, the more we see the folly of our hearts. What a mercy it is that when we walk in the way of faith, in the way of Christ, fools as we are, we shall not err!

9, 10. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go on it, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Like frightened things. They kept us company part of our road, but when the Lord appeared, they took to themselves wings and fled away. We could not tell where they were gone. We were surprised to find that they had quite vanished. Oh, for the appearing of the Lord tonight to His mourning people who may be here!

Hebrews 12:1-8.

Verse 1. Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us. Or. "entangle us."

Volume 63 11 1-3. And let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God. For consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. The Lord does not wish His people's hands to hang down and their knees to become weak, so in this passage, as in many others, He administers gracious remedies! Among the rest, He bids us consider His own dear Son. Shall we faint under our small afflictions when He endured so well under His heavy burdens? Come, be strengthened, my weak heart—

"His way was much rougher and darker than thine— Did Christ, your Lord, suffer, and will you repine?"

4. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. It has hardly come to blows and bruises yet—certainly not to bloody strokes! You have not yet lost blood for Christ.

5. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him. Neither think too little of it, nor too much of it—too little of it by despising it and not listening to the voice of the rod, nor too much of it by fainting when you are rebuked of Him.

6. For whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. Oh, what comfort there is here! Whenever we are under the scourging hand of God, how we ought to be cheered with the thought that this is a part of the heritage of the children! There are Elis who spoil their children. God is not one of them. He spares not the rod and the more He loves, often the more He corrects. A tree of common fruit may be left alone so long as there is some little fruit on it, but the very best fruit gets the sharpest pruning—and I have noticed that in those countries where the best wine is made, the vinedressers cut the shoots right close in, and in the winter you cannot tell that there is a vine there at all unless you watch very carefully! They must cut them back sharp to get sweet clusters. The Lord does thus with His beloved. It is not anger. Afflictions are not always anger. There are often tokens of great love!

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 19,37-40 #678 - Praise Your God-O Zion

PRAISE YOUR GOD, O ZION!

NO. 678

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING. FEBRUARY 25, 1866,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when He was come near, even now at the descent

of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the

disciples began to rejoice and praise God with

a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed is the King

that comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in

Heaven, and glory in the highest! And some of

the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto

Him, Master, rebuke Your disciples. But He answered

and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold

their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

Luke 19:37-40.

THE Savior was "a Man of Sorrows," but every thoughtful mind has dis

covered the fact that down deep in His innermost soul He must have carried an inexhaustible treasury of refined and heavenly joy. I suppose that of all the human race there was never a man who had a deeper, purer, or more abiding peace than our Lord Jesus Christ. "He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." Benevolence is joy. The highest benevolence must, from the very nature of things, have afforded the deepest possible delight.

To be engaged in the most blessed of all errands, to foresee the marvelous results of His labors in time and in eternity, and even to see around Him the fruits of the good which He had done in the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead must have given to such a sympathetic heart as that which beat within the bosom of the Lord Jesus Christ much of secret satisfaction and joy. There were a few remarkable seasons when this joy manifested itself. "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth." Christ had His songs though it was night with Him. And though His face was marred and His countenance had lost the luster of

earthly happiness, yet sometimes it was lit up with a matchless splendor of unparalleled satisfaction as He thought upon the recompense of the reward, and in the midst of the congregation sang His praise unto God. In this, the Lord Jesus is a blessed picture of His Church on earth.

This is the day of Zion's trouble—at this hour the Church expects to walk in sympathy with her Lord along a thorny road. She is outside the camp—through much tribulation she is forcing her way to the crown. She expects to meet with reproaches. To bear the cross is her office, and to be scorned and counted an alien by her mother's children is her lot. And yet the Church has a deep well of joy of which none can drink but her own children! There are stores of wine, and oil, and corn hidden in the midst of our Jerusalem upon which the saints of God are evermore sustained and nurtured. And sometimes, as in our Savior's case, we have our seasons of intense delight for "there is a river, the streams which make glad the city of our God."

Exiles though we are, we rejoice in our King! Yes, in Him we exceedingly rejoice, while in His name we set up our banners! This is a season with us as a Church when we are peculiarly called upon to rejoice in God. The Lord Jesus, in the narrative before us, was going to Jerusalem as His disciples fondly hoped, to take the throne of David and set up the longexpected kingdom. Well might they shout for joy, for the Lord was in their midst—in their midst in state, riding amidst the acclamations of a multitude who had been glad partakers of His goodness. Jesus Christ is in our midst today! The kingdom is securely His. We see the crown glittering upon His brow. He has been riding through our streets, healing our blind, raising our dead and speaking words of comfort to our mourners!

We, too, attend Him in state today, and the acclamations of little children are not lacking, for from our Sunday school there have come songs of converted youngsters who sing gladly, as did the children of Jerusalem in days of yore, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!"

I want, dear Friends, this morning, to stir up in all of us the spirit of holy joy because our King is in our midst! I wish that we may welcome Him and rejoice in Him, and that while He is working His mighty deeds of salvation throughout this congregation so graciously, He may not lack such music as our feeble lips can afford Him. I shall, therefore, invite your attention to these four verses by way of example, that we may take a pattern for our praise from this inspired description.

We shall observe four things—First, delightful praise. Secondly, appropriate song, Thirdly, intrusive objections, and fourthly, an unanswerable argument.

I. First, we shall observe here DELIGHTFUL PRAISE. In the thirtyseventh verse every word is significant and deserves the careful notice of all who would learn aright the lesson of how to magnify the Savior. To begin with, the praise rendered to Christ was speedy praise. The happy choristers did not wait till He had entered the city, but "when He was come near, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, they began to rejoice." It is well to have a quick eye to perceive occasions for gratitude.

Blind Unbelief and blear-eyed Thanklessness allow the favors of God to be forgotten in ingratitude, and, without praises, die. They walk in the noonday of Mercy and see no light to sing by. But a believing, cheerful, grateful spirit detects at once the rising of the Sun of Mercy and begins to sing,

even at the break of day! Christian, if you would sing of the mercy you have already, you would soon have more! If twilight made you glad, you should soon have the bliss of noon! I am certain that the Church in these days has lost much by not being thankful for little. We have had many Prayer Meetings, but few, very few, Praise Meetings—as if the Church could cry loud enough when her own ends were to be answered— but was dumb as to music for her Lord.

Her King acts to her very much as He did with the man with the pound. That man put not out the pound to interest and therefore it was taken away. We have not thanked Him for little mercies, and therefore even these have been removed, and Churches have become barren and deserted by the Spirit of God. Let us lift up the voice of praise to our Master because He has blessed us these twelve years. We have had a continual stream of revival! The cries of sinners have sounded in our ears—every day we have seen souls converted—I was about to say almost every hour of the week, and that by the space of' these twelve years, and of late, we have had a double portion!

Benjamin's mess has been set near our place at the table! We have been made to feast on royal dainties and have been filled with bread even to the full. Shall we not then praise God? Ah, let us not require twice telling of it, but let our souls begin to praise Him, even now, that He comes near unto Jerusalem!

It strikes us at once, also, that this was unanimous praise. Observe, not only the multitude, but the whole multitude of the disciples rejoiced and praised Him! Not one silent tongue among the disciples—not one who withheld his song. And yet, I suppose, those disciples had their trials as we have ours. There might have been a sick wife at home, or a child withering with disease. They were doubtless poor—we know they were—and poverty is never without its pinches. They were men of like passions with ourselves. They had to struggle with inbred sin, and with temptation, and yet there seems to have been no one who on those grounds excluded himself from the choir of singers on that happy day!

Oh, my Soul, whatever you have about you which might bow you down, be glad when you remember that Jesus Christ is glorified in the midst of His Church! Why, my Brother, is that harp of yours hanging on the willows? Have you nothing to sing about? Has He done nothing for you? Why, if you have no personal reason for blessing God, then lend us your heart and voice to help us, for we have more praise-work on hand than we can get through alone—we have more to praise Him for than we are able to discharge without extra aid! Our work of praise is too great for us, come and help us! Sing on our behalf, if you cannot on your own, and then, perhaps, you will catch the flame and find something, after all, for which you, too, must bless Him.

I know there are some of you who do not feel as if you could praise God this morning. Let us ask the Master to put your harp in tune. Oh be not silent! Be not silent! Bless Him! If you cannot bless Him for temporals, bless Him for spirituals! And if you have not of late experimentally enjoyed many of these, then bless Him for what He is. Bless Him for that dear face covered with the bloody sweat—for those pierced hands, for that opened side will you not praise Him? Why, surely, if He had not died for me I must still love Him, to think of His goodness in dying for others! His kindness, the generosity of His noble heart in dying for His enemies might well provoke the most unbelieving to a song.

I am, therefore, not content unless all of you will contribute your note. I would have every bird throw in its note, though some cannot imitate the lark or nightingale! Yes, I would have every tree of the forest clap its hands, and even the hyssop on the wall wave in adoration! Come, Beloved, cheer up! Let dull care and dark fear be gone! Up with harps and down with doubts! It must be praise from "the whole multitude." The praise must be unanimous—not one chord out of order to spoil the tune.

Next, it was multitudinous. "The whole multitude." There is something most inspiriting and exhilarating in the noise of a multitude singing God's praises. Sometimes, when we have been in good tune, and have sung "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," our music has rolled upward like thunder to yon dome and has reverberated peal on peal! These have been the happiest moments some of us have ever known—when every tongue was praise, and every heart was joy! Oh, let us renew those happy times! Let us anticipate the season when the dwellers in the East and in the West, in the North and in the South, of every age and of every clime shall assemble on the celestial hilltops and swell the everlasting song extolling Jesus Lord of all!

Jesus loves the praise of many. He loves to hear the voices of all the blood-washed—

"Ten thousand thousand are their tongues, But all their joys are one."

We are not so many as that, but we are counted by thousands so let us praise His name—the whole multitude! Still it is worthy of observation that while the praise was multitudinous, it was quite select. It was the whole multitude "of the disciples." The Pharisees did not praise Him—they were murmuring. All true praise must come from true hearts. If you do not learn of Christ you can not render to Him acceptable song. These disciples, of course, were of different sorts. Some of them had but just enlisted in the army—just learned to sit at His feet. Some had worked miracles in His name, and, having been called to the Apostolic office, had preached the Word to others—but they were all disciples.

I trust that in this congregation there is a vast majority of disciples— well, then, all of you, you who have lately come into His school, you who have long been in it—you who have become fathers in Israel and are teaching others, the whole multitude of disciples, I hope, will praise God! I could wish—God grant the wish—I could wish that those who are not disciples might soon become so. "Take My yoke upon you," He said, "and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart."

A disciple is a learner. You may not know much, but you need not know anything in coming to Christ! Christ begins with ignorance and bestows wisdom. If you do but know that you know nothing, you know enough to become a disciple of Christ Jesus! There is no matriculation necessary in order to enter into Christ's college. He takes the fools and makes them know the wonders of His dying love. Oh that you may become a disciple! "Write my name down, Sir," you say to the writer with the inkhorn by his side, and be you from now on a humble follower of the Lamb. Now, though I would not have those who are not disciples close their mouths whenever others sing, yet I do think there are some hymns in which they would behave more honestly if they did not join—for there are some expressions which hardly ought to come from unconverted lips. Better far would it be if they would pray, "Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise."

You may have a very sweet voice, my Friend, and may sing with admirable taste and in exquisite harmony any of the parts, but God does not accept the praise where the heart is absent. The best tune in the book is one called Hearts. The whole multitude of the disciples whom Jesus loves are the proper persons to extol the Redeemer's name. May you, dear Hearer, be among that company!

Then, in the next place, you will observe that the praise they rendered was joyful praise. "The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice." I hope the doctrine that Christians ought to be gloomy will soon be driven out of the universe! There are no people in the world who have such a right to be happy, nor have such cause to be joyful as the saints of the living God! All Christian duties should be done joyfully—and especially the work of praising the Lord.

I have been in congregations where the tune was dolorous to the very last degree—where the time was so dreadfully slow that one wondered whether they would ever be able to sing through the 119th Psalm— whether, to use Watts's expression, eternity would not be too short for them to get through it! And altogether the spirit of the people has seemed to be so damp, so heavy, so dead that we might have supposed that they were met to prepare their minds for hanging rather than for blessing the ever-gracious God!

Why, Brethren, true praise sets the heart ringing its bells and hanging out its streamers! Never hang your flag at half-mast when you praise God! No! Run up every color, let every banner wave in the breeze and let all the powers and passions of your spirit exult and rejoice in God your Savior! They rejoiced. We are really most horribly afraid of being too happy. Some Christians think cheerfulness a very dangerous folly, if not a ruinous vice. That joyous Hundredth Psalm has been altered in all the English versions—

"All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell, Come you before Him and rejoice."

"Him serve with fear," says the English version. But the Scotch version has less thistle and far more rose in it. Listen to it, and catch its holy happiness—

"Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell; Come you before Him and rejoice."

How do God's creatures serve Him out of doors? The birds do not sit on a Sunday with folded wings, dolefully silent on the boughs of the trees! They sing as sweetly as may be even though the raindrops fall! As for the newborn lambs in the field—they skip to His praise though the season is damp and cold. Heaven and earth are lit up with gladness, and why not the hearts and houses of the saints? "Him serve with mirth." Well said the Psalmist—"before Him exceedingly rejoice." It was joyful praise.

The next point we must mention is that it was demonstrative praise. They praised Him with their voices and with a loud voice. Propriety very greatly objects to the praise which is rendered by Primitive Methodists at times. Their shouts and hallelujahs are thought by some delicate minds to be very shocking. I would not, however, join in the censure, lest I should be numbered among the Pharisees who said, "Master, rebuke Your disciples." I wish more people were as earnest and even as vehement as the Methodists used to be.

In our Lord's day we see that the people expressed the joy which they felt—I am not sure that they expressed it in the most harmonious manner—but at any rate they expressed it in a hearty, lusty shout. They altogether praised with a loud voice. It is said of Mr. Rowland Hill that on one occasion someone sat on the pulpit stairs who sang in his ears with such a sharp shrill voice that he could endure it no longer, and said to the good woman, "I wish you would be quiet." She answered, "It comes from my heart," "Oh," said he, pray forgive me—sing away! Sing as loudly as you will."

And truly, dear Friends, though one might wish there were more melody in it, yet if your music comes from the heart we cannot object to the loudness, or we might be found objecting to that which the Savior could not and would not blame. Must we not be loud? Do you wonder that we speak out? Have not His mercies a loud tongue? Do not His kindnesses deserve to be proclaimed aloud? Were not the cries upon the Cross so loud that the very rocks were rent thereby—and shall our music be a whisper?

No, as Watts declares, we would—

"Loud as His thunders shout His praise, And sound it lofty as His Throne."

If not with loud voices actually in sound, yet we would make the praise of God loud by our actions, which speak louder than any words! We would extol Him by great deeds of kindness, and love, and self-denial, and zeal so that our actions may assist our words. "The whole multitude praised Him with a loud voice." Let me ask every Christian here to do something in the praise of God—to speak in some way for his Master. I would say, speak today—if you cannot with your voice—speak by act and deed, but join in the hearty shout of all the saints of God while you praise and bless the name of our ever gracious Lord.

The praise rendered, though very demonstrative, was very reasonable— the reason is given—"for all the mighty works that they had seen." My dear Friends, we have seen many mighty works which Christ has done. I do not know what these disciples had seen. Certain it is that after Christ entered into Jerusalem He was generous with His miracles. The blind were healed, the deaf had their ears opened—many of those possessed with devils were delivered—and incurable diseases gave way at His word. I think we have the like reason in a spiritual sense. What has God worked? It has been marvelous—as our elders would tell you if they could recount what God has done—the many who have come forward during the last fortnight to tell what God has done for their souls.

The Holy Spirit has met with some whom up to now no ministry had reached. Some have been convicted of sin who were wrapped up in selfrighteous rags. Others have been comforted whose desponding hearts drew near unto despair. I am sure those Brethren who sat to see enquirers must have been astonished when they found some hundreds coming to talk about the things that make for their peace! It was blessed work, I doubt not, for them. They, therefore, would lead the strain. But you have all in your measure seen something of it. During the meetings we have held we have enjoyed an overpowering sense of the Divine Presence. Without excitement there has been a holy bowing of spirit, and yet a blessed lifting up of hope, and joy, and holy fervor! The Master has cast sweet smiles upon His Church! He has come near to His beloved. He has given her the tokens of His affection and made her to rejoice with joy unspeakable! Any joy which we have towards Christ, then, will be reasonable enough, for we have seen His mighty works.

With another remark I shall close this first head—the reason for their joy was a personal one. There is no praise to God so sweet as that which flows from the man who has tasted that the Lord is gracious. Some of you have been converted during the last two or three months. Oh, you must bless Him! You must take the front rank now and bless His name for the mighty work which you have seen in yourself! The things which once were dear to you, you now abhor, and those things which seemed dry and empty are now sweet and full of savor. God has turned your darkness into light! He has brought you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and has set your feet upon a rock! Shall not your established goings yield Him a grateful song? You shall bless Him!

Others here present have had their own children saved. God has looked on one family and another, and taken one, and two, and three. He has been pleased to lay His hand upon the elders among us and bless their families. Oh sing unto His name! Sing praises for the mighty works which we have seen! This will be commonplace talk enough to those of you who have not seen it—but those who have will feel the tears starting to their eyes as they think of son and daughter of whom they can say, "Behold, he prays!"

Saints of God, I wish I could snatch a firebrand from the altar of praise that burns before the great Throne of God—I wish I could fire your hearts with it—but it is the Master's work to do it. Oh, may He do it now! May every one of you feel as if you could cast your crown at His feet! As if you could sing like the cherubim and the seraphim, nor yield even the first place of gratitude to the brightest spirit before the Eternal Throne! This morning may it be truly said, "The whole multitude of the disciples rejoiced with a loud voice for all the mighty things which they had seen."—

"O come, loud anthems let us sing, Loud thanks to our Almighty King. For we our voices high should raise, When our salvation's Rock we praise. Into His Presence let us haste, To thank Him for His favors past! To Him address, in joyful songs, The praise that to His name belongs."

II. I shall now lead you on to the second point—their praise found vent for itself in AN APPROPRIATE SONG. "Blessed is the King that comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!" It was an appropriate song, if you will remember that it had Christ for its subject! "My heart is writing of a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king."

No song is so sweet from believing lips as that which tells of Him who loved us and who gave Himself for us. This particular song sings of Christ in His Character of King—a right royal song, then—a melody fit for a coronation day. Crown Him! Crown Him Lord of all! That was the refrain. "Blessed be the King." It sang of that King as commissioned by the Most High, "who comes in the name of the Lord." Think of Christ as bearing Divine authority, as coming down to men in God our Father's name—as speaking what He has heard in Heaven, fulfilling no self-espoused errand, but a mission upon which the Divine Father sent Him according to His purpose and decree—all this is matter for music!

Oh bless the Lord, you saints, as you remember that your Savior is the Lord's Anointed—He has set Him on His Throne! Jehovah, who was pleased to bruise Him, has said, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." See the Godhead of your Savior! He whom you adore, the Son of Mary, is the Son of God! He who did ride upon a colt, the foal of an ass, did also ride upon a cherub and did fly—yes, He rode upon the wings of the wind!

They spread their garments in the way, and broke down branches. It was a humble triumph, but long before this the angels had strewn His path with adoring songs. Before Him went the lightning, coals of fire were in His track, and up from His Throne went forth hailstones and coals of fire! Blessed be the King! Oh praise Him this day! Praise the King, Divine and commissioned of His Father!

The burden of their song was, however, of Christ present in their midst. I do not think they would have rejoiced so loudly and sweetly if He had not been there. That was the source and center of their mirth—the King riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass—the King triumphant! They could not but be glad when He revealed Himself. Beloved, our King is here! We sang at the beginning of this visitation, "Arise, O King of Grace, arise, and enter to Your rest!" You remember our singing the verse—

"O You that are the Mighty One, Your sword gird on Your thigh."

And King Jesus has done so in state—He has ridden prosperously—and out of the ivory palaces His heart has been made glad! And the King's daughter, all-glorious within, standing at His right hand, cannot but be glad, too! Loud to His praise wake every string of your heart and let your souls make the Lord Jesus the burden of their song!

This was an appropriate song, in the next place, because it had God for its object. They extolled God, God in Christ, when they thus lifted up their voices. They said, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest." When we extol Christ, we desire to bless the infinite Majesty that gave Christ to us. Thanks be unto the Father for His unspeakable gift! O eternal God, we, Your creatures in this little world do unfeignedly bless You for Your great purpose and decree by which You did choose us to be illustrious exhibitions of Your majesty and love!

We bless You that You did give us Grace in Christ Your Son before the starry sky was spread abroad! We praise You, O God, and magnify Your name as we enquire, "What is man, that You are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you visit him?" How could You deign to stoop from all the Glory of Your infinity to be made Man, to suffer, to bleed, to die for us? "Give unto the Lord, O you mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name." Oh that I could give place to some inspired bard, some seer of old, who, standing before you with mouth streaming with holy eloquence, should extol Him that lives, but once was slain, and bless the God who sent Him here below that He might redeem unto Himself a people who should show forth His praise!

I think this song to have been very appropriate for another reason, namely, because it had the universe for its scope. It was not praise within walls as ours this morning—the multitude sung in the open air with no walls but the horizon—with no roof but the arch of Heaven! Their song, though it was from Heaven, did not stay there, but enclosed the world within its range. It was, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!" It is very singularly like that song of the angels, that Christmas carol of the spirits from on high when Christ was born—but it differs, for the angels' song was, "Peace on earth," and this at the gates of Jerusalem was, "Peace in Heaven."

It is the nature of song to spread itself. From Heaven the sacred joy began when angels sang, and then the fire blazed down to earth in the words, "Peace on earth." But now the song began on earth, and so it blazed up to Heaven with the words, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!"

Is it not a wonderful thing that a company of poor beings like we here below can really affect the highest heavens? Every throb of gratitude which heaves our hearts glows through Heaven! God can receive no actual increase of Glory from His creature for He has infinite Glory and majesty—but yet the creature manifests that Glory.

A grateful man here below, when his heart is all on fire with sacred love, warms Heaven itself! The multitude sung of peace in Heaven as though the angels were established in their peaceful seats by the Savior— as though the war which God had waged with sin was now over because the conquering King was come! Oh let us seek after music which shall be fitted for other spheres! I would begin the music here and so my soul should rise. Oh for some heavenly notes to bear my passions to the skies! It was appropriate to the occasion because the universe was its sphere.

And it seems also to have been most appropriate because it had gratitude for its spirit. They cried aloud, "Blessed"—Blessed is the King." We cannot bless God and yet we do bless Him in the sense in which He blesses us. Our goodness cannot extend to Him, but we reflect the blessedness which streams from Him as light from the sun. Blessed be Jesus! My Brothers and Sisters, have you never wished to make Him happier? Have you not wished that you could extol Him? Let Him be exalted! Let Him sit on high! I have almost wished, even selfishly, that He were not so glorious as He is so that we might help to lift Him higher! Oh, if the crushing of my body, soul, and spirit would make Him one atom more glorious, I would not only consent to the sacrifice, but bless His name that He counted me worthy to do so!

All that we can do brings nothing to Him. Yet, Brethren, I would that He had His own. Oh that He rode over our great land in triumph! Would that King Jesus were as well known here now as He was once in Puritan times! Would that Scotland were as loyal to Him as in Covenanting periods! Would that Jesus had His majesty visible in the eyes of all men! We pray for this! We seek this! And among the chief joys our most chief joy is to know that God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow!

We have thus said something about the appropriateness of the song. May you, each of you, light upon such hymns as will serve to set forth your own case and show forth the mercy of God in saving you. Do not be slack in praising Him in such notes as may be most suitable to your own condition.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly—for I am not going to give much time to these men—we have INTRUSIVE OBJECTIONS. "Master, rebuke Your disciples." We know that voice—the old grunt of the Pharisee. What could he do otherwise? Such is the man and such must his communications be. While he can dare to boast, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are," he is not likely to join in praises such as other men lift up to Heaven.

But why did these Pharisees object? I suppose it was first of all because they thought there would be no praise for themselves! If the multitude had been saying, "Oh these blessed Pharisees! These excellent Pharisees! What broad phylacteries! What admirable hems to their garments! How diligently and scrupulously they tithe their mint and their anise and their cummin! What a wonder that God should permit us, poor vile creatures, to look upon these super-excellent incarnations of virtue," I will be bound to say there would not have been a man among them who would have said, "Master, rebuke Your disciples." A proud heart never praises God for it hoards up

praise for itself.

In the next place, they were jealous of the people. They did not feel so happy themselves and they could not bear that other people should be glad. They were like the elder brother who said, "Yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Was that a reason why nobody else should be merry? A very ill reason, truly! Oh, if we cannot rejoice, ourselves, let us stand out of the way of other people! If we have no music in our own hearts, let us not wish to stop those who have!

But I think the main point was that they were jealous of Jesus. They did not like to have Christ crowned with majesty. Certainly this is the drift of the human heart. It does not wish to see Jesus Christ extolled. Preach up morality or dry doctrine, or ceremonies and many will be glad to hear your notes. But preach up Jesus Christ and some will say, "Master, rebuke your disciples!" It was not ill advice of an old preacher to a young beginner when he said, "Preach nothing down but sin, and preach nothing up but Christ."

Brethren, let us praise nothing up but Christ! Have nothing to say about your Church. Say nothing about your denomination. Hold your tongue about the minister—but praise Christ—and I know the Pharisees will not like it! But that is an excellent reason to give them more of it, for that which Satan does not admire he ought to have more of. The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil. The preaching of Christ is the thunderbolt, the sound of which makes all Hell shake. Let us never be silent! We shall put to confusion all our foes if we do but extol Christ Jesus the Lord. "Master, rebuke Your disciples!"

Well, there is not much of this for Jesus Christ to rebuke in the Christian Church in the present day. There used to be—there used to be a little of what the world calls fanaticism. A consecrated cobbler once set forth to preach the Gospel in Hindustan. There were men who would go preaching the Gospel among the heathen, counting not their lives dear unto them. The day was when the Church was so foolish as to fling away precious lives for Christ's Glory! Ah, she is more prudent nowadays. Alas! Alas for your prudence! She is so calm and so quiet—no Methodist's zeal, now! Even that denomination which did seem alive has become most proper and most cold.

And we are so charitable, too. We let the most abominable doctrines be preached and we put our finger on our lip, and say, "There's so many good people who think so." Nothing is to be rebuked nowadays, Brethren! One's soul is sick of this! Oh, for the old fire again! The Church will never prosper till it comes once more. Oh, for the old fanaticism, for that, indeed, was the Spirit of God making men's spirits in earnest! Oh, for the old doing and daring that risked everything and cared for nothing except to glorify Him who shed His blood upon the Cross! May we live to see such bright and holy days again! The world may murmur but Christ will not rebuke.

IV. We come now to the last point, which is this—AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT. He said, "If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out." Brothers and Sisters, I think that is very much our case. If we were not to praise God, the very stones might cry out against us! We MUST praise the Lord! Woe unto us if we do not! It is impossible for us to hold our tongues! Saved from Hell and be silent? Secure of Heaven and be ungrateful? Bought with precious blood and hold our tongues? Filled with the Spirit and not speak? Restrain from fear of feeble man with the Spirit's course within our souls? God forbid!

In the name of the Most High let such a thought be given to the winds! What? Our children are saved—the offspring of our loins brought to Christ! What? See them springing up like willows by the water courses, and no awakening of song, no gladness, no delight! Oh, then we were worse than brutes and our hearts would have been steeled and become as adamant. We must praise God! What? The King in our midst, King Jesus smiling into our souls, feasting us at His table, making His word precious to us, and not praise Him! Why if Satan could know the delight of Christ's company he might begin to love—but we, we were worse than devils if we did not praise the name of Jesus! What? The King's arm made bare, His enemies subdued, His triumphant chariot rolling through our streets, and no song!

Oh Zion, if we forget to sing let our right hand forget her cunning if we count not the King's triumph above our chief joy. What? The King coming! His advent drawing near, the signs of blessing in the sky and air abound, and yet no song! Oh, we must bless Him! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! But could the stones ever cry out? Yes, they could, and if they were to speak they would have much to talk of even as we have this day. If the stones were to speak they could tell of their Maker—and shall not we tell of Him who made us anew, and out of stones raised up children unto Abraham? They could speak of ages long since gone—the old rocks could tell of chaos and order and the handiwork of God in various stages of creation's drama—and cannot we talk of God's decrees, of God's great work in ancient times, and all that He did for His Church? If the stones were to speak they could tell of their breaker, how he took them from the quarry, and made them fit for the temple—and cannot we tell of our Creator and Maker, who broke our hearts with the hammer of His Word that He might build us into His temple?

If the stones were to speak they would tell of their builder who polished them and fashioned them after the similitude of a palace—and shall not we talk of our Architect and Builder who has put us in our place in the temple of the living God? Oh, if the stones could speak they might have a long, long story to tell by way of memorial, for many a time has a great stone been rolled as a memorial unto God—and we can tell of Ebenezers, stones of help, stones of remembrance! The broken stones of the Law cry out against us, but Christ Himself, who has rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, speaks for us.

Stones might well cry out, but we will not let them! We will hush their noise with ours! We will break forth into sacred song and bless the majesty of the Most High all our days! Let this day and tomorrow be especially consecrated to holy joys and may the Lord, in infinite mercy, fill your souls right full of it—both in practical deeds of kindness and benevolence and works of praise! Blessed be His name who lives forever and ever!

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

Luke 19,41 #1570 - The Lamentations of Jesus

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JESUS

NO. 1570

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 28, 1880,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When He had come near, He beheld the city and wept over it."

Luke 19:41.

ON three occasions we are told that Jesus wept. You know them well, but it may be worth while to refresh your memories. The first was when our Lord was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He saw the sorrow of the sisters and He meditated upon the fruit of sin in the death and corruption of the body and He groaned in spirit and it is written that "Jesus wept." Those who divided the chapters did well to make a separate verse of that simple sentence. It stands alone, the smallest and yet, in some respects, the greatest verse in the whole Bible! It shines as a diamond of the first water. It contains a world of healing balm condensed into a drop. Here we have much in little—a wealth of meaning in two words.

The second occasion we have before us and we will make it the theme of our discourse. At the sight of the beloved but rebellious city, Jesus wept. The third occasion is mentioned by the Apostle Paul in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews where he tells us what else we might not have known, that the Savior, "in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death and was heard in that He feared." That passage relates to the Gethsemane agony in which a shower of bitter tears was mingled with the bloody sweat. The strength of His love strove with the anguish of His soul and, in the process, forced forth the sacred waters of His eyes. Thus our Savior wept in sympathy with domestic sorrow and sanctified the tears of the bereaved.

We, too, may weep when brethren and friends lie dead, for Jesus wept. There need not be rebellion in our mourning, for Jesus fully consented to the Divine will and yet He wept. We may weep at the graves of those we love and yet be guiltless of unbelief as to their resurrection, for Jesus knew that Lazarus would rise again and yet He wept. Our Lord, in weeping over Jerusalem, showed His sympathy with national troubles and His distress at the evils which awaited His countrymen. Men should not cease to be patriots when they become Believers—saints should bemoan the ills which come upon the guilty people among whom they are numbered and do so all the more because they are saints.

Our Lord's third weeping was induced by the great burden of human guilt which pressed upon Him. This shows us how we, too, should look upon the guilt of men and mourn over it before God.

But in this special weeping Jesus is alone—there was a something in the tears of Gethsemane to which we cannot reach, for He who shed them was then beginning to suffer as our Substitute and in that case He must necessarily tread the winepress alone and of the people there must be none with Him. Behold beneath the olive trees a solitary Weeper enduring a grief which, blessed be His name, is now impossible to us, seeing He has taken away the transgressions which called for it!

We will now turn to this second instance of our Savior's weeping and here we find, when we look at the original words, that it is not exactly expressed by the words used in our admirable English version. We there read, "He beheld the city and wept over it," but the Greek means a great deal more than tears and includes sobs and cries. Perhaps it may be best to read it, "He lamented over it." He suffered a deep inward anguish and He expressed it by signs of woe and by words which showed how bitter was His grief. Our subject will not be the lamentations of Jeremiah, but the lamentations of Jesus—the lamentations of Him who could more truly say than the weeping Prophet, "I am the Man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. My eyes run down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of My people. Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me."

Jesus is here a King by general acclamation, but King of grief by personal lamentation. He is the Sovereign of sorrow, weeping while riding in triumph in the midst of His followers. Did He ever look more kingly than when He showed the tenderness of His heart towards His rebellious subjects? The city which had been the metropolis of the house of David never saw so truly a royal man before, for He is most fit to rule who is most ready to sympathize! We shall, this morning, as God shall help us, first, consider our Lord's inward grief. And then, secondly, His verbal lamentation. Oh for the power of the Spirit to bless the meditation to the melting of all our hearts! O Lord, speak to the rock and bid the waters flow, or, if it pleases You better, strike it with Your rod and make it gush with rivers— only in some way make us answer to the mourning of our Savior—

"Did Christ over sinners weep And shall our cheeks be dry?

Let floods of penitential grief

Burst forth from every eye."

I. First, we are to contemplate OUR LORD'S INWARD GRIEF. We note concerning it that it was so intense that it could not be restrained by the occasion. The occasion was one entirely by itself—a brief gleam of sunlight in a cloudy day, a glimpse of summer amid a cruel winter. His disciples had brought the colt and had placed Him on it and He was riding to the city which was altogether moved at His coming. The multitudes were eager to do Him homage with waving branches and loud hosannas, while His disciples in the inner circle were exulting in songs of praise which almost emulated the angelic chorales of His birth night. "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men," found its echo when the disciples said, "Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord: peace in Heaven and glory in the highest."

Yet amidst the hosannas of the multitude, while the palm branches were yet in many hands, the Savior stopped to weep! On the very spot where David had gone centuries before weeping, the Son of David stayed awhile to look upon the city and to pour out His lamentation! That must have been deep grief which ran counter to all the demands of the season and violated, as it were, all the decorum of the occasion. It turned a festival into a mourning, a triumph into a lament. Ah, He knew

the hollowness of all the praises which were ringing in His ears! He knew that they who shouted hosanna today would, before many suns had risen, cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" He knew that His joyous entrance into Jerusalem would be followed by a mournful procession out of it when they would take Him to the Cross that He might die.

He saw amid all the effervescence of the moment the small residue of sincerity that there was in it and He accepted it—but He lamented the abundance of mere outward excitement which would disappear like the froth of the sea—and so He stood and wept. It was a great sorrow, surely, which turned such a day of hopefulness into a season of anguish. It strikes me that all that day the Savior fasted and, if so, it is singular that He should have purposely kept for Himself a fast while others on His account held a festival! The reason why He did so, I think, is this—Mark says, "And now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon."

Such hunger had not come upon Him if it had not been preceded by a fast the day before. See, then, your Lord surrounded, as it were, with billows of praise in the midst of a tumultuous sea of exultation, Himself standing as a lone rock, unmoved by all the excitement around Him. Deep was the grief which could not be concealed or controlled on such a day when the sincere congratulations of His disciples, the happy songs of children and the loud hosannas of the multitude everywhere welcomed Him.

The greatness of His grief may be seen, again, by the fact that it overshadowed other very natural feelings which might have been and, perhaps, were, excited by the occasion. Our Lord stood on the brow of the hill where He could see Jerusalem before Him in all its beauty. What thoughts it awakened in Him! His memory was stronger and quicker than ours, for His mental powers were unimpaired by sin and He could remember all the great and glorious things which had been spoken of Zion, the city of God. Yet, as He remembered them all, no joy came into His soul because of the victories of David or the pomp of Solomon—Temple and tower had lost all charm for Him—"the joy of the earth" brought no joy to Him. And at the sight of the venerable city and its holy and beautiful house He wept.

Modern travelers who have any soul in them are always moved by the sublimity of the spectacle from the Mount of Olives. Dean Stanley wrote, "Nothing at Rome, Memphis, Thebes, Constantinople, or Athens can approach it in beauty or interest." And yet this is the poor, mean Jerusalem of modern times—by no means to be compared with the Jerusalem of our Savior's day! Yet the Lord Jesus says nothing about this city, "Beautiful for situation," except to lament over it. If He counts the towers there and marks well her bulwarks, it is only to bemoan their total overthrow. All the memories of the past did but swell the torrent of His anguish in the foresight of her doom!

Something of admiration may have entered the Savior's holy breast, for before Him stood His Father's house, of which He still thought so much that even though He knew it would be left desolate, yet He took pains to purge it once again of the buyers and sellers who polluted it. That Temple was built of white marble and much of it, the roof especially, covered with slabs of gold. It must have been one of the fairest objects that ever human eye rested upon as it glittered in the sun before Him. But what were those great and costly stones? What were those curious carvings to Him? His heart was saying within itself, "There shall not be one stone left upon another that

shall not be thrown down."

His sadness at the foresight of the city's desolation mastered His natural feeling of admiration for its present glory. His sorrow found no alleviation either in the past or the present of the city's history—the dreadful future threw a pall over all. It mastered, too, the sympathy which He usually felt for those who were about Him. He would not stop His disciples from rejoicing, though the Pharisees asked Him, but He, Himself, took no share in the joy. Usually He was the most sensitive of men to all who were around Him, sorrowing with their sorrow and joying in their joy. But on this occasion they may wave their palms and cut down branches of trees and strew them in the way and the children may shout, Hosanna, but He who was the center of it all did not enter into the feeling of the hour—they celebrate—He weeps.

More striking, still, is the fact that His grief for others prevented all apprehension for Himself. As He beheld that city, knowing that within a week He would die outside its gates, He might naturally have begun to feel the shadow of His sufferings, but no trace of such emotion is discoverable. You and I, in such a case, with the certainty of a speedy and ignominious death before us, would have been heavy about it, but Jesus was not. In all that flood of tears there was not one for His own death! The tears were all for Jerusalem's doom, even as He said afterwards, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but for yourselves and for your children."

It is not "Woe is Me, the holy city will become an Aceldama, a field of blood by My slaughter," but, "Oh, if you had known, even you, in this, your day." He grieves for others, not for Himself! Yet it must have been a very intense emotion which thus swept away, as with a torrent, everything else so that He had neither joy for joy, nor sorrow for sorrow, but His whole strength of feeling was poured forth from one sluice and ran in one channel towards the devoted city which had rejected Him and was about to put Him to death! This great sorrow of His reveals to us the Nature of our Lord. How complex is the Person of Christ! He foresaw that the city would be destroyed and though He was Divine, He wept! He knew every single event and detail of the dreadful tragedy and used words about it of special historical accuracy which bring out His prophetic Character and yet the eyes so clear in seeing the future were almost blinded with tears!

He speaks of Himself as willing and able to have averted this doom by gathering the guilty ones under His wings and thus He intimates His Godhead. While His Nature on the one side of it sees the certainty of the doom, the same Nature, from another side, laments the dread necessity! I will not say that His Godhead foresaw and His Manhood lamented, for so mysteriously is the Manhood joined to the Godhead that it makes but one Person and it were better to assert that the entire Nature of Christ lamented over Jerusalem. I have never been able to believe in an impassive God, though many theologians lay it down as an axiom that God cannot suffer. It seems to me that He can do or endure anything He wills to do or endure and I, for one, cannot see that there is any special glorifying of God in the notion that He is incapable in any direction whatever. We can only speak of Him after the manner of men and after that manner He speaks of Himself and, therefore, there is no wrong in so doing.

It brings the great Father nearer when we see Him lamenting the wanderings of His children and joying in their penitent return. What but sorrow can be meant by such expressions as these? "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me; My repentings are kindled together."

"Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." Are these the utterances of an unfeeling God? I believe it is the Christ, the entire Christ that both foretells the doom of Jerusalem and laments it.

Some have even been staggered at the statement that Jesus wept. Certain of the early Christians, I am sorry to say, even went the length of striking the passage out of the Gospel because they thought that weeping would dishonor their Lord. They ought to have had more reverence for the Inspired Word and a truer knowledge of their Master and never to have wished to obliterate a record which reflects the highest honor upon man's Redeemer. Our Lord's lament gives us an insight into the great tenderness of His Character—He is so tender that He not only weeps while weeping would be of no use—but He laments when lamentation must be fruitless! He reminds me of a judge who, having before been a friend by warning, persuading, pleading with the prisoner, at last has the unutterable pain of condemning him—he puts on the black cap and, with many a sigh and tear, pronounces sentence—feeling the dreadful nature of the occasion far more than the criminal at the bar.

He is overcome with emotion while he declares that the condemned must be taken to the place from where he came and there die a felon's death. Oh the tender heart of Christ, that when it comes to pronouncing the inevitable sentence, "Your house is left unto you desolate," yet He cannot utter the righteous words without lamentation! In this our Lord reveals the very heart of God! Did He not say, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father"? Here, then, you see the Father, Himself, even He who said of old, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." The doom must be pronounced, for infinite Justice demands it, but Mercy laments what she was not permitted to prevent. Tears fall amid the thunders and though the doom is sealed by obstinate impenitence, yet judgment is evidently strange work to the patient Judge. This anguish showed how dreadful was the sentence, for what could stir the Savior so if the doom of sinners is a small affair? If the doom of guilt is such a trifle as some dream, I understand not why these tears! The whole Nature of Christ is convulsed as He thinks, first of Jerusalem plowed as a field and her children slaughtered till their blood runs in rivers of gore and, next, as He beholds the doom of the ungodly who must be driven from His Presence and from the Glory of His power to be the awful witnesses of Divine Justice and of God's hatred of evil. Thus standing on the brow of Olivet, the weeping Son of Man reveals to us the heart of God—slow to anger, of great mercy, waiting to be gracious and tardy in executing His wrath.

For a practical lesson, we may remark that this weeping of the Savior should much encourage men to trust Him. Those who desire His salvation may approach Him without hesitation, for His tears prove His hearty desires for our good. When a man who is not given to sentimental tears, as some effeminate beings are, is seen to weep, we are convinced of his sincerity. When a strong man is passionately convulsed from head to foot and pours out lamentations, you feel that he is in downright earnest and if that earnestness is manifested on your behalf you can commit yourself to him. Oh, weeping Sinner, fear not to come to a weeping Savior! If you will not come to Jesus, it grieves Him! That you have not come long ago has wrung His heart! That you are still away from Him is His daily sorrow—come, then, to Him without delay!

Let His tears banish your fears, yes, He gives you better encouragement than tears, for He has shed for sinners not drops from His eyes, alone, but from His heart! He died that sinners who believe in Him might live! His whole body was covered with bloody sweat when He agonized for you— how can you doubt His readiness to receive you? The five scars that still remain upon His blessed Person, up there at the Father's right hand, all invite you to approach Him! These dumb mouths most eloquently entreat you to draw near and trust in Him whom God has set forth as the Propitiation for sin! How shall He that wept and bled and died for sinners repulse a sinner who comes to Him at His bidding? Oh, come, come, come, I pray you, even now, to the weeping sinner's Friend.

This, too, I think is an admonishment to Christian workers. Some of us, long ago, came to Jesus and we now occupy ourselves with endeavoring to bring others to Him. In this blessed work our Lord instructs us by His example. Brothers and Sisters, if we would have others come to Jesus we must be like Jesus in tenderness. We must be meek, lowly, gentle and sympathetic and we must be moved to deep emotion at the thought that any should perish. Never let us speak harshly of the doom of the wicked. Never let us speak flippantly, or without holy grief—the loss of Heaven and the endurance of Hell must always be themes for tears! That men should live without Christ is grief enough—but that they should DIE without Christ is an overwhelming horror which should grind our hearts to powder before God and make us fall on our faces and cry, "O God, have mercy upon them and save them, for Your Grace and for Your love's sake."

The deepest tenderness, it may be, some of us have yet to learn. Perhaps we are passing through a school in which we shall be taught it and if we do but learn it we need not care how severe the instructive discipline may be. We ought not to look upon this city of London without tears, nor even upon a single sinner without sorrow. We must preach tenderly and teach tenderly if we would win souls. We are not to weep continually, for even Jesus did not do that, yet are we always to feel a tender love towards men so that we would be ready to die for them if we might but save them from the wrath to come and bring them into the haven of the Savior's rest!

Let me add that I think the lament of Jesus should instruct all those who would now come to Him as to the manner of their approach. While I appealed to you, just now, were there any who said, "I would gladly come to Jesus, but how shall I come?" The answer is—come with sorrow and with prayer, even as it is written, "they shall come with weeping and with supplications will I lead them." As Jesus meets you, so meet Him. He shows you in what fashion to return, in what array to draw near to your Redeemer, for He comes to you clothed in no robes but those of mourning, adorned with no jewels but the pearls of His tears. Come to Him in the garments of humiliation, mourning for your sin. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Penitential sorrow works life into men. Only come to Jesus and tell Him you have sinned and are ashamed and gladly would cease to do evil and learn to do well. Come in all your misery and degradation, in all your consciousness of your Hell-deservedness. Come in sorrow to the Man of Sorrows who is even now on the road to meet you! He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," and He will not forfeit His Word. God bless these feeble words concerning the inner emotions of my Lord and may the Holy Spirit again rest upon us while we further pursue the subject into another field.

II. We are now to consider OUR LORD'S VERBAL LAMENTATIONS. These are recorded in the following words—"Oh that you had known, even you, at least in this, your day, the things which belong unto your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes." First, notice He laments over the fault by which they perished—"Oh that you had known." Ignorance, willful ignorance, was their ruin. "Oh that you had known." They did not know what they might have known—what they ought to have known—they did not know their God. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider."

They knew not God! They knew not God's only Son! They knew not Him who came in mercy to them with nothing but love upon His lips! Oh, but this is the pity, that the Light of God is come into the world and men will not have it, but love darkness rather than Light. Alas, I fear that some of my hearers live in the Light and will not see. There are none so deaf as those that will not hear and none so blind as those that will not see—and yet there are such in all Christian congregations—who do not know and will not know. God says, "Oh that you had hearkened to My Commandments, then had your peace been as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." Our Lord lamented over the inhabitants of Jerusalem because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord— they would have none of His counsel—they despised His reproof.

Willful ignorance led to obstinate unbelief. They chose to die in the dark rather than accept the Light of the Son of God! The Lord laments the bliss which they had lost, the peace which could not be theirs, "Oh that you had known the things that belong unto your peace." The name of that city was, as we know, Jerusalem, which, being interpreted, signifies a vision of peace. They that looked upon it saw before them a vision of peace. But, alas, Jerusalem had lost its "salem," or peace, and become only a vision because she did not know and would not know her God! Oh men and women that know not God, you have lost peace! Even now you are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt!

"There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked." Oh what joys you might have had! The delights of pardoned sin, the bliss of conscious safety, the joy of communion with God—the rapture of fellowship with Christ Jesus, the heavenly expectation of infinite Glory—all might have been yours! But you have put them away from you. The Lord says of you, as of Israel of old, "O that My people had hearkened unto Me and Israel had walked in My ways! I would soon have subdued their enemies and turned My hand upon their adversaries." God would have revealed to you, by His Spirit, brighter things than eyes have seen and sweeter joys than ears have heard—for if you had been willing and obedient you would have eaten the fat of the land of His promises! You are losers! You are awful losers by not being reconciled to God and you will be worse losers yet, for that false peace which now stands in the place of true peace and beguiles and fascinates you will depart like the mirage of the desert and leave you on the arid sands of despair to seek rest and find it not!

Soon shall a terrible sound be in your ears of the approaching vengeance of God and there shall be for you no place of refuge. When the Lord thought of what they had lost, He cried, "Oh that you had known!" I feel ashamed to repeat His Words because I cannot repeat them in the tone He used. Oh, to hear Jesus say these words! I think it might melt a heart of stone! But no, I am mistaken, even that would not do it, for those who did hear Him were not melted nor reclaimed, but

went on their way to their doom as they had done before! How hardened are the men who can trample on a Redeemer's tears! What wonder that they find a Hell where not a drop of water can ever cool their parched tongues tormented in the flames! If men are resolved to be damned, it is evident that the tears of the best, the most perfect of men cannot stop them! Woe is me! This is deeper cause for tears than all else besides, that men should be so desperately set on mischief that nothing but Omnipotence will stop them from eternal suicide!

But our Lord also lamented over they who had lost peace. Observe that He says—"Oh that you had known, even you. You are Jerusalem, the favored city. It is little that Egypt did not know, that Tyre and Sidon did not know, but that you should not know!" Ah, Friends, if Jesus were here this morning, He might weep over some of you and say—"Oh that you had known, even you." You were a lovely child! Even in your earliest days you were fond of everything good and gracious! You were taken to the place of worship and sat on your mother's knee, pleased to be there. Do you remember the minister's name that you used to lisp with delight, the texts you repeated and the hymns you sang? You grew up to be a lad right full of promise and all felt sure that you would be a Christian.

What exhortations your father, who is now in Heaven, gave you! And she that bore you and loved you till she passed away! How she prayed and pleaded for you! Some of you have been sitting here, or in some other place where Christ is preached, for a very long time and you have often been very near to the Kingdom and yet you are not in it. You have come right up to the edge of the border, but you have not crossed the line. You are not far from the Kingdom of God, but you lack one thing—the one essential point of decision for Christ—"Oh that you had known, even you!" You are always ready to help the cause of God with your purse, for you take an interest in every good work—you cannot bear blasphemy or infidelity—and yet you are not saved!

There are a thousand things that are hopeful about you, but there is one thing which dampens our hope, for you always procrastinate and know not how to use your present opportunity. Jesus bids you use "this your day," but you linger and delay. Today is God's accepted time! Postpone no longer the hour of decision! Alas that you should perish! Shall the child of such a mother be lost? Shall the son of such a father be driven down to Hell? I cannot bear it! God have mercy on you, sons and daughters of Christian parents! You that have been enriched with Christian privileges, why will you die? Young man, so promising but yet so undecided, it makes the Savior, Himself, weep that you, even you, should still refuse to know the things that make for your peace!

Our Lord wept because of the opportunity which they had neglected. He said, "At least in this, your day." It was such a favored day—they had been warned by holy men, but now they had the Son of God, Himself, to preach to them! It was a day of miracles of mercy, a day of the unveiling of Gospel Grace! And yet they would not have Christ though He had come so near to them and it was a day of merciful visitation such as other nations had not known. Perhaps today, also, may be a day of visitation for some of you. Shall we have to lament, "Oh that you had known, even you, at least in this, your day"—on this Lord's-Day, this day of power, this day of the Spirit? Oh, by His Grace, you now weep and I perceive you feel some tender touches of the Spirit's power! Do not resist Him and cause this day, also, to pass away unimproved!

"The harvest is passed, the summer is ended and you are not saved." And has the autumn closed and shall the winter come and go and shall these days in which the Spirit visits men all depart till

God shall declare that it does not become the dignity of His Spirit to always strive with flesh and, therefore, He shall cease His operations and leave men to their own devices? Oh, souls, I pray you think of Christ weeping because revival days and Sundays are being wasted by you! Do not, in these best of days, commit the worst of sins by still refusing to receive the Gospel of God! The Lord Jesus mourned, again, because He saw the blindness which had stolen over them. They had shut their eyes so fast that now they could not see—their ears which they had stopped had become dull and heavy—their hearts which they had hardened had waxen gross so that they could not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor feel in their hearts, nor be converted that He should heal them.

Why, the Truth of God was as plain as the sun in the heavens and yet they could not see it! And so is the Gospel at this hour to many of you and yet you perceive it not. There is nothing plainer than the plan of salvation by looking unto Jesus and yet many men have gone on so long resisting the sweetness and Light of the Spirit of God that they cannot, now, see the Lord Jesus who is as the sun in the heavens! The kindest friends have put the Gospel before them in a way that has enlightened others, but it has not affected them. They still say, "I cannot see it!" O you blind ones, take heed lest this has come upon you, "Behold, you despisers and wonder and perish." Christ groans because the timings which belonged to the peace of Jerusalem were hid from their eyes as a punishment for refusing to see.

Lastly, we know that the great floodgates of Christ's grief were pulled up because of the ruin which He foresaw. It is worth any man's while to read the story of the destruction of Jerusalem as it is told by Josephus—it is the most harrowing of all records written by human pen! It remains the tragedy of tragedies! There never was and there never will be anything comparable to it. The people died of famine and of pestilence and fell by thousands beneath the swords of their own countrymen. Women devoured the flesh of their own children and men raged against each other with the fury of beasts. All ills seemed to meet in that doomed city! It was filled within with horrors and surrounded without by terrors. There was no escape, neither would the frenzied people accept mercy.

The city itself was the banqueting hall of death. Josephus says, "All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress and devour the people by whole houses and families. The upper rooms were full of women and infants that were dying by famine and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged. The children, also, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with the famine and fell down dead wherever their misery seized them. For a time the dead were buried, but afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the wall into the valleys beneath. When Titus, on going his rounds along these valleys, saw them full of dead bodies and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan and, spreading out his hands to Heaven, called God to witness this was not his doing."

There is nothing in history to exceed this horror! But even this is nothing compared with the destruction of a soul. A man might look with complacency upon a dying body if he knew that within it was a soul that would live eternally in bliss and cause the body to rise again to equal joy. But for a soul to die is a catastrophe so terrible that the heavens might be clothed with sackcloth for its funeral! There is a death which never ends! The separation of the soul from God—which is the

most complete of all deaths! The separation of the soul from the body is but, as it were, a prelude and type of the far more dreadful death—the separation of the soul from God. Banished from hope, existing but not living and that forever! What a condition this must be!

I shall draw no picture. Words fail but, oh, my Hearers, shall it be that anyone among you shall always know the meaning of the Savior's words— "These shall go away into everlasting punishment"? Will it ever be your lot to hear Him say—you who hear me this day, I mean—"Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels"? If we could mark any here to whom this doom will happen, we might make a ring around them and bring them home tearing our garments and tearing our hair, for it would be a far greater grief than if we knew that they would die by the sword or by famine in a foreign land! All ills are trifles compared with the second death!

Bear with me just a moment while, in conclusion, I set forth our Savior's grief as it expressed itself in other words, for those other words may help us to fresh light. You remember the passage in the 23rd of Matthew which I read in your hearing, where the Lord said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you would not!"? Do you see His Grace and grief? These people killed the Prophets and yet the Lord of Prophets would have gathered them! His love had gone so far that even Prophet-killers He would have gathered! Is not this amazing that there should be Grace enough in Christ to gather adulterers, thieves, liars and to forgive and change them and yet they will not be gathered? That Jesus should be willing, even, to gather such base ones into a place of salvation and yet should be refused?

The pith of it lies in this—"How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you would not." See, here, the case stands thus—I would, but you would not. This is a grief to love. If it had been a fact that Christ would not, then I could not understand His tears, but when He says "I would, but you would not," then I see the deep reason of His anguish! The failure of will is in you that perish, not in Christ who cries, "I would, but you would not." Yes and He adds, "How often would I." Not once was He in a merciful mood and pitiful to sinners for that time, alone, but He cries, "How often would I have gathered."

Every Prophet that had come to them had indicated an opportunity for their being gathered and every time that Jesus preached there was a door set open for their salvation, but they would not be gathered and so He foretells their fate in these words—"Your house shall be left unto you desolate." Here is a painful sentence. Set the two words in contrast— "Gathered," that is what you might have been! "Desolate," that is what you shall be—and Jesus weeps because of it! "Gathered"—it is such a beautiful picture! You see the little chicks fleeing from danger when they hear the cluck of the mother hen. They gather together and they come under her wings.

Did you ever hear that little, pretty cry they make when they are all together with their heads buried in the feathers? How warm and comfortable they are! This is where you might have been, gathered under the warm breast of the eternal God, feeling His love with the rest of the people—joying and rejoicing in a communion of complete security! But inasmuch as you would not be gathered, see what you will be—"desolate," without a friend, without a helper. Then you will call to the saints, but they will not be able to help you. Say to them, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out"—but they must refuse you. Unto which of the holy ones will you turn? What angel

will have pity upon you? Each cherub waves his fiery sword to keep you from the gate of Paradise. There is no help for you in God when once you die without Him! No help for you anywhere.

Desolate! Desolate! Desolate! Because you would not be gathered! Well does the tender Savior weep over men since they will perversely choose such a doom! I do not feel as if I should close in gloom. I must flash before you a brighter light, though it is but for the last minute. The day hastens on when Christ will come a second time and then He shall behold a new Jerusalem, a spiritual Jerusalem, built by Divine hands. The foundations thereof are of jewels and the gates thereof are of pearl. How He will rejoice over it! He shall rest in His love and He shall rejoice over it with singing! He will shed no tears, then, but He will see in the Jerusalem from above the travail of His soul and He shall be satisfied. When Zion shall be built up, the Lord shall appear in His Glory and the marriage of the Lamb will have come.

Meanwhile, if any one of you who are not yet saved will come to Jesus, He will rejoice over you, for He takes pleasure in the stones of Zion and favors the dust, there, and if you are as little as Zion's dust and as mean as her rubbish, He will rejoice over you! It is written that, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Now, angels stand in the Presence of the Lord Jesus and there is joy in His heart over a single penitent! If only one sinner shall repent because of this sermon, my Lord will rejoice over Him! I, His servant, am, in my measure, intensely glad when a soul repents, but He shall have the chief joy, for His is the chief love!

Who will now come to Jesus? Would to God it might be the beloved son of a godly mother! Would to God it might be you, my long hesitating Hearer, for years a hearer but not a doer of the Word. May the Holy Spirit decide you at this very moment! Amen.

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Luke 20,37-38 #1863 - Departed Saints Yet Living

DEPARTED SAINTS YET LIVING

NO. 1863

SUGGESTED BY THE DECEASE OF THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY.

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 1885,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead

are raised, when he called the Lord, 'the God of Abraham,

the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' For He is not the

God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him."

Luke 20:37-38.

DURING the past week, the Church of God and the world at large have sustained a very serious loss. In the taking home to Himself by our gracious lord, the Earl of Shaftesbury, we have, in my judgement, lost the best man of the age. I do not know whom I should place second, but I certainly should put him first—far beyond all other servants of God within my knowledge—for usefulness and influence. He was a man most true in his personal piety, as I know from having enjoyed his private friendship. He was a man most firm in his faith in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; a man intensely active in the cause of God and the Truth of God. Take him whichever way you please, he was admirable. He was faithful to God in all His house, fulfilling both the first and second commands of the Law in fervent love to God and hearty love to man. He occupied his high position with singleness of purpose and immovable steadfastness—where shall we find his equal? If it is not possible that he was absolutely perfect, it is equally impossible for me to mention a single fault, for I saw none. He exhibited Scriptural perfection, inasmuch as he was sincere, true and consecrated.

Those things which have been regarded as faults in him by the loose thinkers of this age are prime virtues in my esteem. They called him narrow—and in this they bear unconscious testimony to his loyalty to the Truth of God. I rejoiced greatly in his integrity, his fearlessness, his adherence to principle in a day when the Revelation of God is questioned, the Gospel explained away and human thought set up as the idol of the hour. He felt that there was a vital and eternal difference between the Truth of God and error and, consequently, he did not act or talk as if there was much to be said on either side and, therefore, no one could be quite sure. We shall not know for many a year how much we miss in missing him; how great an anchor he was to this drifting generation and

Volume 31 1how great a stimulus he was to every movement for the benefit of the poor!

Both man and beast may unite in mourning him! He was the friend of every living thing. He lived for the oppressed; he lived for London; he lived for the nation and he lived, still more, for God! He has finished his course and though we do not lay him to sleep in the grave with the sorrow of those that have no hope, yet we cannot but mourn that a great man and a prince has fallen this day in Israel! Surely the righteous are taken away from the evil to come and we are left to struggle on under increasing difficulties.

It must always be so. The godly must die, even as others. Though our life is perfectly consecrated, yet it cannot forever be continued in this world. It is appointed unto men once, to die, and that appointment stands. We expect the present rule to last till He shall come who shall destroy the last enemy. We are not troubled with Sadducean doubts. To us, seeing that Christ rose from the dead, it is a matter of certainty that all His followers must rise, also. And seeing that Jesus always lived, it is equally a matter of certainty to us that all the saints are still living, for He has said, "Because I live, you shall live, also." Yet, if no infidelity is permitted to creep into our brain and disturb our belief, it may penetrate into our heart and cause us great sadness. We who believe in Jesus should rise into an atmosphere more clear and warm than that of the sepulcher, for the Lord Jesus has "abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel."

We are not now sitting in the shadow of death, for eternal light has sprung up! Children of God, it is in the highest degree proper that you should think of things as your Father thinks of them—and He says that "all live unto God." Let us correct our phraseology by that of Scripture, and speak of departed saints as Divine Inspiration speaks of them! Then shall we come back to the simple child's talk which Wordsworth so sweetly turned into rhyme—"Master, we are seven," and in our family we shall number brothers, sisters and friends, whose bodies lie in the churchyard and shall speak of those who have crossed the border and passed within the veil as still our own! Like Jesus, we shall say, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps." Like Paul, we shall speak of them as absent from the body but present with the Lord and regard them as part and parcel of the one family in Heaven and earth!

Our text was fashioned in a place which has the air of death, burial and resurrection about it. The voice came to Moses in the desert. This was a strange place for Moses—the living, active, well-instructed mind of Moses, mighty in all the wisdom of Egypt and full of noble thoughts concerning the living God—was buried in a desert. It is singular to see the foremost mind of the age in the remotest part of the desert hidden away among sheep! He who was a born king is, here, feeding a flock. It is death to Moses. Rest assured that Moses cannot be kept in this living tomb—he must rise to life and leadership. While there is a God and a Providence, Moses cannot continue in obscurity. There are certainties wrapped up in him which cannot fail. A man need not be a Prophet to stand at Horeb and prognosticate that Moses will emerge from the desert and shake Egypt by his resurrection!

While Moses is in the desert, he is thinking about another case of death, burial and resurrection, namely, Israel in Egypt. The people of God, the favored nation of Jehovah with whom He had entered into Covenant, saying, "I will be their God and they shall be My people"—these were in Egypt, ground down by relentless oppression, begrimed with brick dust and black and blue with the blows of taskmasters. It has come to this, that they are compelled to cast their male children

into the river and so to be the destroyers of their own race! The children of Israel have become a herd of slaves, yet they are God's elect people, God's favored family! It does not require a Prophet to declare that this death in Egypt cannot last—the elect nation must live and rise and go forth free to serve the Lord! No, Israel, you shall never perish! The voice must yet be heard— "Thus says the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me!"

And so, while Moses in the desert is thinking of Israel in Egypt, he sees a bush, and that bush is all ablaze. An ordinary bush upon the heath needs only to be touched with a match and, in one moment, there is a puff of flame and then all is over—nothing is left but a trace of ashes. Yet here was an extraordinary thing—a bush that continued to burn and was not consumed! Here was life in the midst of death, continuance in the midst of destruction! This was an emblem of God abiding with a people and yet suffering them to live—or of the fires of affliction being rendered harmless to the children of God. He who then spoke to Moses was the God of Life, the God who could sustain in the midst of destruction! He was the God who could preserve even a bush from being devoured by the intense fury of flame! Said I not truly that the surroundings of Moses and the bush all favor a display of life in death and resurrection out of death?

Now we come to the central matter. Out of the midst of the bush there came a Voice, a mysterious and Divine Voice which said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." From this Voice our Divine Lord teaches us to gather this fact—that God's people live when they appear to have been long dead—for He who cannot be the God of the dead, or non-existent, still avows Himself to be the God of the longburied Patriarchs! Our Lord proved from that utterance at the bush, the continued life of the Lord's chosen and also their resurrection—how did He do this?

I. We will not go straight to the answer, but we will beat about the bush a little, that the reasoning may the more gently enter our minds. I would say, first, that in these words we have A GLORIOUS RELATIONSHIP DECLARED. Moses called the Lord, "The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

The glorious Lord did, at the bush, as good as say, "These three men have chosen Me to be their God." So they had—through the Grace of God they had deliberately chosen to part with their natural kindred in the country of the Chaldees and to journey to a land of which they knew nothing except that God had promised that they should afterwards receive it for an inheritance. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were three very different characters, yet this was common to the three—that they believed God and took Him to be their God, alone. They nestled in the bosom of Jehovah while the rest of the world went after their idols. In all their troubles, they flew to Jehovah; for the supply of all their needs they resorted to Him, alone. They were men who had, through Divine Grace, deliberately attached themselves unto Jehovah, the Most High, throughout the whole of their lives.

It is a sublime sight to see a man trust in God as Abraham did—and obey the Lord fully as he did in the matter of Isaac, when he accounted God to be able to raise him up, even from the dead. Surely there must be everlasting life in a being who could thus confide in Jehovah! I call you to admire the fact that God called the Patriarchs into the noble position of following the Lord fully, of fixed and settled choice. Being men of like passions with ourselves, they nevertheless cast in their lot with the Lord and for His sake preferred the life of strangers and pilgrims on the earth to the comforts of settled residence in Ur of the Chaldees and to the sinful pleasures of Canaan. We,

also, take this God to be our God, even the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. There is a nobility about the choosers of the true God which will surely secure them from annihilation.

Next, these three men had learned to commune with God. How wondrously had Abraham spoken with God! Full many a spot was consecrated as "the place where he stood before the Lord." Isaac also walked in the fields at eventide and, doubtless, there entered into secret fellowship with God. The Lord also appeared unto him at night and led him to build an altar and call upon the name of Jehovah. The good old man, even in his blindness, found solace in communion with the Lord God Almighty. Jacob, also, was favored with heavenly visitations. We can never forget that mystic dream at Bethel, nor the wrestling at Jabbok, nor the many times when he turned to the God of his father Abraham and his father Isaac—and God spoke with him as a man speaks with his friend! It is a wonderful thing that the Lord should thus commune with men. He does not thus show Himself to the beasts which perish. He does not thus reveal Himself to the lifeless stones of the field. Those are strangely honored beings with whom God enters into close communion as He did with these three men! I argue from it that these beings cannot dissolve into a handful of dust and cease to be. Can those eyes cease to be which have seen the Lord? Can these souls perish which have conversed with the Eternal? We think not! And, just now, I ask you only to meditate upon the glories to which the Patriarchs were lifted up when they were permitted to be the Friends of God.

What was still more notable, the Lord entered into Covenant with them. He made a Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which He remembered, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you." You know how the Lord swore to give unto the seed of Abraham a goodly heritage, a land that flowed with milk and honey. Now, it is a wonderful thing that God should enter into compact with man. Does He make an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, with mere insects of an hour? Especially, would He give His Son Jesus to die to seal the everlasting Covenant by His heart's blood with mere shadows who are but for a little time and then cease to be? I am sure it is not so. If God makes men capable of entering into an everlasting Covenant with Himself, there lies within that fact the clear suggestion that He imparts to them an existence which is not for today and tomorrow, but for eternity! Still, I wish you mainly to regard the Glory into which manhood is lifted up when God enters into gracious Covenant with it.

Moreover, to go further, these men were not only in Covenant with God, but they had lived in accordance with that Covenant. I do not mean that they had lived perfectly in accord with it, but that the main strain of their lives was in conformity with their Covenant relationship to God. For the sake of that Covenant, Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt no longer in the land of Haran, but became a sojourner with God in the land of Canaan. For the sake of this, he sent away his firstborn after the flesh, seeing it was said, "In Isaac shall your seed be called." "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." These faithful men had respect to the recompense of the reward and, therefore, they were not mindful of the country from where they came out, neither sought opportunity to return.

Jacob, the most faulty of the three, greatly as he erred in his conduct to his brother Esau, was evidently actuated by an intense faith in the Covenant birthright so that he ventured all things to obtain it. In his old age and death, he was anxious not to be confused with the Egyptians, or separated from the chosen household and, therefore, he said unto Joseph, "But I will lie with my

fathers, and you shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place." This he made Joseph swear, for he must make sure of it. He was aiming at the promise, despite the errors that he committed in so doing. Now, does God enter into Covenant with men and help men to live in accordance with that Covenant and, after all, shall they miss the blessing? Shall it end in nothing? Hiding beneath the shadow of God's wings, shall they, after all, perish? It cannot be! They must live to whom God is God.

For this was the Covenant, that they should have God to be their God and that they should be God's people. O Brothers and Sisters, I do not know how to speak on such a blessing as this, though I live in the daily enjoyment of it! This God is our God. All that the Lord is and all that He can do, He has given over to us, to be used on our behalf—the fullness of His Grace and Truth, the infinity of His Love, the Omnipotence of His Power, the Infallibility of His Wisdom—all, all shall be used on our behalf! The Lord has given Himself over to His people to be their inheritance and, on the other hand, we, poor weak feeble creatures as we are, are taken to be the peculiar treasure of the living God! "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." "The Lord's portion is His people: Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." We are God's heritage, we are God's jewels, we are God's children, we are dear to Him as the apple of His eye! We are to Him as the signet upon His hand and the crown upon His head! He cannot have chosen for His portion a mass of corruption, or a handful of brown dust—yet that is what the body comes to in death. He cannot have chosen for His heritage that which will melt back into mother earth and be no more found—this cannot be!

The Covenant has within it the sure guarantee of eternal life. Oh what an honor it is that God should even say to you and to me—"I will be your God and you shall be My people. Beyond the angels, beyond Heaven, beyond all My other creatures, I reserve you unto Myself. I have loved you with an everlasting love. I will rest in My love to you. I will rejoice over you with singing." In this the Lord has highly exalted His covenanted ones and raised them to great nearness to Himself—and thus to glory and honor. What has God worked? What is man that God is thus mindful of him, or the son of man that He thus visits him? Angels are nowhere as compared with men, yes, cherubim with all their burning bliss and consecrated ardor cannot match with men who are in Covenant with God! Blessed above all other beings are those who have Jehovah to be their God and who are, themselves, the Lord's choice, care and delight! Each one of these points, if well thought out, will go to strengthen our belief that the saints must live, must live forever and are, at this moment, living unto God.

II. We now come to that matter more distinctly under our second head—here is ETERNAL LIFE IMPLIED, for "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

It is implied, first, in the very fact of the Covenant of Grace. As I have asked before—Does the eternal God covenant with creatures that shall live only to threescore years and 10 and then shall go out like a candle-snuff? How can He be a God to them? I understand how He can be a helper and a friend to men of brief existence, but I see not how He can be a God. Must they not partake in His eternity if it is truly said, "I will be your God"? How can the Lord be an eternal blessing to an ending being? He has power and He will give me sufficient strength; He has wisdom and He will give me as much of His wisdom as I am capable of receiving. Must He not, also, cause me to partake of His immortality? How is He a God to me if He suffers me to be blotted out of existence?

When David said in dying, "Yet has He made with me an everlasting Covenant," his comfort lay in his belief that he should live in the everlasting age to enjoy the fruit of that Covenant. How could there be an everlasting Covenant with a creature who would cease to exist?

But next, this Covenant was made up of promises of a very peculiar order for, in very deed, the Covenant that God made with Abraham was not altogether, or even mainly, concerning things temporal. It was not only the land of Canaan of which the Lord spoke to Abraham, but the Patriarchs declared plainly that they desired "a better, that is, an heavenly country" (Hebrews 11:16). Even when they were in Canaan, they were still looking for a country—and the city promised to them was not Jerusalem for, according to Paul in the 11th of the Hebrews, they still were looking for "a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." They did not find, in their earthly lives, the complete fulfillment of the Covenant, for they received not the promises, but saw them afar off and were persuaded of them. The temporal blessings which God gave to them were not their expected portion—they took hold upon invisible realities and lived in expectation of them!

They were evidently actuated by faith in something spiritual, something everlasting and they believed that the Covenant which God had made with them concerned such things. I have not the time to go into this subject. You get it more fully explained to you in the Epistle to the Hebrews—but so it was, that the Covenant blessings were of an order and a class that could not be compassed within the space of this present mortal life—the outlook of Covenant promises was towards the boundless sea of eternity. Now, if the Lord made a Covenant with them concerning eternal blessings, these saints must live to enjoy those blessings. God did not promise endless blessings to the creatures of a day.

More especially, Beloved, it is to be remembered that for the sake of these eternal things, the Patriarchs had given up transient enjoyments. Abraham might have been a quiet prince in his own country, living in comfort, but, for the sake of the spiritual blessing, he left Chaldea and came to wander in the pastures of Canaan—in the midst of enemies—and to dwell in tents in the midst of discomforts. Isaac and Jacob were "heirs with him, also, of the same promises," but they entered not into the pursuits of the people—they dwelt alone and were not numbered among the nations. Like Moses, to whom God spoke, they, "counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

They left kith and kin and all the advantages of settled civilized life to be rangers of the desert, exiles from their fatherland. They were the very types and models of those who have no abiding city here and, therefore, for certain, though they died in hope, not having received the promise, we cannot believe that God deceived them! Their God was no mocker of them and, therefore, they must live after death! They had lived in this poor life for something not seen as yet and, if there is no such thing and no future life, they had been duped and mislead into a mistaken self-denial. If there is no life to come, the best philosophy is that which says, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Since these men put this life in pawn for the next, they were sadly mistaken if there is no such life. Do you not see the force of our Savior's reasoning?—God, who has led His people to abandon the present for the future—must justify their choice.

Besides, the Lord had staked His honor and His reputation upon these men's lives. "Do you want to know," says He, "who I am? I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. If you want to

know how I deal with My servants, go and look at the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." My Brothers and Sisters, as far as the earthly lives of the Patriarchs can be written in human records, they are certainly full of God's loving kindness—but still, there is nothing so remarkably joyous and majestic about them from a natural point of view as to make the Lord's dealings with them appear to be especially wonderful. Others who did not fear God have been as rich, powerful and honorable as they. Especially is the life of Jacob plowed and cross-plowed with affliction and trial! He spoke the truth when he summed up his life in the words, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Does the Lord intend us to judge of His goodness to His servants from the written life of Jacob? Or from the career of any one of His servants? The judgement must include the ages of an endless blessedness! This life is but the brief preface to the volume of our history! It is but the rough border, the selvage of the rich cloth of our being! These rippling streams of life come not to an end, but flow into the endless, shoreless ocean of bliss! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have long been enjoying happiness and shall enjoy it throughout eternity! God is not ashamed to be called their God if you judge of the whole of their being—He would not have spoken thus if the visible were all and there were no future to counterbalance the tribulations of this mortal life! God is not the God of the short-lived who are so speedily dead—He is the living God of an immortal race whose present is but a dark passage into a bright future which can never end!

Yet further, to bring out the meaning here, God cannot be the God of the non-existent. The supposition is too absurd! Our Savior does not argue about it, but He says so most peremptorily! God is not the God of the dead—that cannot be! If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are reduced to a handful of ashes, God cannot be, at this moment, their God. We cannot take a dead object to be our God, neither can Jehovah be a God to lifeless clay. God is not the God of putrefaction and annihilation! God is not the God of that which has ceased to be! We have but to put the idea into words to make it dissolve before the glance of reason. A living God is the God of living men—and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive!

This even goes far to show that the bodies of these saints shall yet live. God reckons His covenanted ones to be alive. He says, "The dead are raised." He reckons them to be raised and, as He reckons nothing falsely, it is said by way of anticipation, "Your dead men shall live." Inasmuch as a portion of these chosen ones is still in the earth, God, who reckons things that are not, as though they were, looks upon their bodies as possessing life because they are to possess life so soon. God is not only the God of Abraham's soul, but of Abraham as a whole—his body, soul and spirit! God is the God of Abraham's body—we are sure of that because the Covenant seal was set upon the flesh of Abraham. Where the doubt might be, there is the confirming seal, namely, in his mortal body. There was no seal set upon his soul, for the soul had life and could not see death—no, it was set upon his body which would die—to make sure that even it would live!

At this day we have Baptism and the Holy Supper to be seals as to the body. I have sometimes thought to myself that it were better if there were no water Baptism, seeing it has become the nest of so much superstition. And the Lord's Supper, with all its blessed uses, has been so abused that one is apt to think that without outward ordinances there might be more spiritual religion—but the Lord intends that the materialism of man and of creation shall be lifted up—and that the body shall be raised incorruptible and, therefore, has He given seals which touch the outward and material. The water where the body is washed and the bread and wine whereby the body is nourished, are tokens that there comes to us not only spiritual and invisible blessings, but even such as shall

redeem and purify our mortal body! The grave cannot hold any portion of the covenanted ones! Eternal life is the portion of the whole man. God is the God of our entire manhood—spirit, soul and body—and all live unto Him in their entirety. The whole of the Covenant shall be fulfilled to the whole of those with whom that Covenant was made!

This is good reasoning to those who have gone beyond mere reason and have ascended into the realm of faith. May the Holy Spirit grant unto us to be among them!

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, beloved Friends, my text not only declares glorious relationship and implies eternal life, but it also unveils somewhat scantily, but still sufficiently, what the glorious life must be! Look, then, and see the GLORIOUS LIFE UNVEILED!

It is clear that they live personally. It is not said, "I am the God of the whole body of the saints in one mass." But, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob." God will make His people to live individually. My mother, my father, my child—each will personally exist. God is the God of saints, as living distinct lives—Abraham is Abraham, Isaac is Isaac, Jacob is Jacob! The three Patriarchs were not all melted into one common Abraham, nor Isaac into one imaginary Isaac. Neither was anyone so altered as to cease to be himself. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are all literally living as actual men—and the same men as they used to be. Jacob is Jacob and not an echo of Abraham! Isaac is Isaac and not a rehearsal of Jacob. All the saints are existent in their personality, identity, distinction and idiosyncrasy.

What is more, the Patriarchs are mentioned by their names and so it is clear they are known—they are not three anonymous bodies—but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Many inquire, "Shall we know our friends in Heaven?" Why should we not? The saints in Heaven are never spoken of in Scripture as moving about anonymously—their names are spoken of as written in the Book of Life. Why is this? The Apostles knew Moses and Elijah on the Mount, though they had never seen them before. I cannot forget old John Ryland's answer to his wife—"John," she said, "will you know me in Heaven?" "Betty," he replied, "I have known you well, here, and I shall not be a bigger fool in Heaven than I am now—therefore I shall certainly know you there." That seems to be clear enough! We read in the New Testament, "They shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven"—not sit down with three unknown individuals in iron masks, or three impersonalities who make a part of the great pan, nor three spirits who are as exactly alike as pins made in a factory—but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is clear enough in the text.

That glorious life, while it is a personal and a known life, is also free from all sorrow, misery and earthly grossness. They are neither married nor given in marriage; neither shall they die any more. But they are as the angels of God. It is a life of perfect blessedness, a life of hallowed worship, a life of undivided Glory! Oh, that we were in it! Oh that we may soon reach it! Let us think of the many who are enjoying it now and of those who have attained to it during the last few days. I am sure they are at home in every golden street and fully engaged in the adoration and worship of their Lord. Those saints who have been in Glory, now, these thousands of years cannot be more blessed than the latest arrivals. Within a very short space you and I shall be among the shining ones! Some of us may spend our next Sabbath with the angels! Let us rejoice and be glad at the bare thought of it. Some of as are not doomed to live here through another winter—we shall pass beyond these autumn fogs into the golden light of the eternal summer before another Christmas day has come! Oh the joy which ought to thrill our souls at the thought of such amazing bliss!

And now, taking the whole subject together, I want to say a few familiar things about the influence which all this ought to have upon us. Concerning those that have gone before us, we gather from this whole text that they are not lost. We know where they are. Neither have they lost anything, for they are what they were and more. Abraham has about him still everything that is Abrahamic. He is still Abraham. And Isaac has everything about him that properly belongs to Isaac. And Jacob has all about him that makes him God's Israel. These good men have lost nothing that really appertained to their individuality, nothing that made them precious in the sight of the Lord. They have infinitely gained—they have gloriously developed! They are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob now at their best—or rather they are waiting till the trumpet of the Resurrection shall sound— when their bodies also shall be united to their spirits—and then Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be completely Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, world without end!

We are, by no means, deprived of our dear ones by their death—they are—they are themselves and they are still ours. As Abraham is not lost to Isaac, nor to Jacob, nor to God, nor to himself, so are our beloved ones, by no means, lost to us. Do not let us think of them, then, as if they were lost. I know your sorrows make an excursion to the grave, to look for the deceased ones. You want to lift that coffin lid and to unwrap the shroud. Oh, do not, do not! He is not here; the real man has gone. He may be dead to you, for a while, but he lives unto God. Yes, the dead one lives! He lives unto God! Do but anticipate the passage of that little time, which is almost gone while I am speaking of it, and then your Savior's angels shall sound their golden trumpets and at the welcome noise, the grave shall open its portals and resign its captives. "Your brother shall rise again." Comfort one another with these words! Shaftesbury is as much Shaftesbury as ever and even more so! We have parted with the Earl, but the saint lives! He has gone past yonder veil into the next room and there he is, before the Lord of Hosts! He has gone out of this dim, dusky, cloudy chamber into the bright, pearly light that streams from the Throne of God and of the Lamb! We have nothing to sorrow about in reference to what he is or where he is. So, too, your valued parents and beloved children and choice friends—they are still yours!

Herein is great cause for thankfulness. Put aside your sackcloth and wear the garments of hope! Lay down the sackbut and take up the trumpet! Draw not the beloved bodies to the cemetery with dreary pomp and with black horses, but cover the coffin with sweet flowers and drape the horses with emblems of hope! It is the better birthday of the saint, yes, his truer wedding day! Is it sad to have done with sadness? Is it sorrowful to part with sorrow? No, rather, when joy begins to our friends, where Glory dwells in Immanuel's land, we may in sympathy sing, as it were, a new song, and tune our harps to the melodies of the glorified!

I want you, also, to remember that the departed have not become members of another race—they have not been transferred into another family— they are still men, still women, still of our dear kindred. Their names are in the same family register on earth and in Heaven. Oh, no, no! Do not dream that they are separated and exiled! They have gone to the Home country—we are the exiles—they are Home! We are en route to the Fatherland—they are not so far from us as we think. Sin worked to divide them from us and us from them while we were here, together, but since sin is now taken away from them, one dividing element is gone! When it is also removed from us, we shall be nearer to each other than we could have been while we were both sinful! Do not let us think of them as gone far, for we are one in Christ.

And they are not gone over to the other side in the battle. Oh, do not speak of them as dead and lying on the battle-field! They live, they live in sympathy with our Divine conflict. They have marched through the enemy's country. They have fought their fight and taken possession of their inheritance. They are still on our side, though we miss them from the daily service. When you number up the hosts of God, you must not forget the godlike bands that have fought the good fight, kept the faith, and finished their course. They are in the armies of the Lord, though not at this moment resisting unto blood. The 144,000 sealed unto the Lord include in their ranks all who are with God, whether here or in Heaven—

"One family we dwell in Him, One Church, above, beneath, Though now divided by the stream, The narrow stream of Death."

Our sacramental host marches onward to the New Jerusalem. Certain of the legionaries have forded the dividing flood. I see them ascending the other side! The bank of the river is white with their rising companies. Lo! I hear the splash of the ranks before us as they steadily pass down into the chill stream! In deep silence we see them solemnly wading through the billows. The host is ever marching on, marching on. The much dreaded stream lies a little before us—it is but a silver streak. We have come to the bank. We shudder not at the prospect! We follow the blessed footsteps of our Lord and His redeemed. We are still all one army—we are not losing our men—they are simply ascending from the long campaign to take their endless rewards at the Lord's right hand!

What then? Why, then we will take up their work. If they have gone into the upper chamber to rest, we will make up their lack of service in this lower room! The work they did was so human that we will not allow a stitch to drop, but take it up where they left it and persevere in earnest. They are in Glory, but they were not glorified when they were here. The work they did was done by men of such infirmities as ours, so let us not fear to go on where they left off and perpetuate the work which they rejoiced in! There lies the plow in the furrow and the oxen are standing still, for Shamgar, the champion, is gone. Will no one lay hold of the plow handles? Will nobody urge the oxen with the goad? Young men, are you idling? Here is work for you! Are you hiding yourselves? Come forward, I pray you, in the name of the great Husbandman, and let the fields be tilled and sown with the good seed! Who will fill the gap made by death? Who will be baptized for the dead? Who will bear the banner, now that a standard bearer has fallen? I hope some consecrated voice will answer, "Here am I; send me!"

Now, last of all, Brothers and Sisters, we may expect the same assistance as they received who have gone before. Jehovah says that He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. But He also says, "I am the God of your father." The father of Moses had the Lord to be his God! That God is the God of my father, blessed be His name! As I took the old man by his hand, yesterday, at the age of 76, I could not but rejoice in all the faithfulness of the Lord to him and to his house. He was the God of my father's father, also—I cannot forget how the venerable man laid his hands upon his grandchild and blessed him—and the blessing is with him still. Yes, and He is the God of my children and He shall be the God of my children's children, for He keeps Covenant to thousands of them that love Him! Therefore take courage, Brothers and Sisters! This God is your God! He is a God to you and you are a people to Him!

Act as His true servants. Live as those who are elect. If you are His choice, be choice characters! The chosen should be the best, should they not? The elect should be especially distinguished above all others by their conversation and their fervent zeal for Him that chose them. As you shall rise from among the dead because the Lord Jesus has redeemed you from among men, so stand up from among the dead and corrupt mass of this world—and be alive unto God—through Jesus Christ your Lord! What manner of people ought you to be who serve the living God? Since the living God has manifested Himself so wonderfully to you, ought you not to live unto Him to the utmost? God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Exodus 3:1-10; Luke 20:27-30.

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Luke 21,28-31 #2496 - Joyful Anticipation of the S

JOYFUL ANTICIPATION

OF THE SECOND ADVENT

NO. 2496

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,

DECEMBER 20, 1896.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1885.

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift

up your heads, for your redemption draws near. And He spoke to them a parable, Behold this fig tree and all the trees. When they

are budding, you see and know, yourselves, that summer is

now near. So likewise, when you see these things happening,

you know that the Kingdom of God is near."

Luke 21:28-31.

I have already said that I conceive our Lord Jesus Christ to have re

garded the destruction of Jerusalem as "the beginning of the end." Although some 1800 years have rolled away since that terrible event, we, with Him, may make but small account of the interval and regard it all as one dispensation of passing away. That beautiful city was the very crown of the entire earth because God had dwelt there. It may be compared to the diamond in a ring, the jewel whose setting was the whole world—and when that jewel was destroyed and God did, as it were, grind it to powder—it was a warning that the ring, itself, would, by-and-by, be crushed and consumed, for "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The destruction of Jerusalem was, so to speak, the rolling up of the curtain on the great drama of the world's doom. It will not fall again until all the things that we now see shall have passed away and only the things that cannot be shaken—the things of God and of eternity, which we cannot see—shall remain.

Moreover, I think that from this chapter, if we are to understand it all—and it is confessedly very difficult to comprehend—we must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple

as being a kind of rehearsal of what is yet to be. God's long-suffering was displayed with Israel for centuries. The rebellious tribes had ample space for repentance. They had even been carried away into captivity and, by the Lord's gracious loving kindness, they had struggled back again. Yet, only changing the form of their apostasy, they continued to wander away from God. They were bent on backsliding from Jehovah even when their idols were all destroyed and the seed of Abraham had come to hate every sort of symbol and image! Yet, then, they began to set up other kinds of idols in the traditions of the fathers, and the inventions of the scribes. Thus they lost the spirit of Divine teaching in the mere letter of it and became

Volume 42 1only formalists when they ceased to be idolaters, for, mind you, the truth, if it is dead, has no more virtue in it than falsehood has.

When the Spirit of God is gone out of that which, in itself, is right, it becomes often a cover wherein a thousand evils conceal themselves. So, at last, God's long-suffering had come to an end and, according to current tradition, there was a sound as of the moving of wings in the Holy Place at Jerusalem and it is reported that one priest, who stood to officiate at the altar, heard the solemn sentence, "Let Us go hence," for God was about to leave His Temple. That Temple had already torn its veil from top to bottom for very shame at what had been done to the Lord's Christ—and now the fabric, itself, must be consumed with fire, even in spite of the order of the Roman emperor. With all his power, he could not save it from ruin, and so completely was the city destroyed that Zion was plowed as a field and the very site of the Temple was, for many a day, a question in dispute.

Ah, my Friends, this was a picture—a faint picture—of what shall be the case when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again! Then, all external religion—if it is but external—shall perish in the fire and only the spiritual and the true shall live. "For, behold, the day comes that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble and the day that comes shall burn them up," as it was, with the Temple fabric! In the day that is coming, only that shall endure upon which fire can have no power. Only that shall stand which is God's own eternal Truth. So, then, I regard that destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple as the beginning of the end, and also as the rehearsal of what is yet to be.

The times before the destruction of Jerusalem were terrible to the last degree. If you have read Josephus, you cannot but feel your heart bleed for the poor Jews. They were utterly infatuated. They were so carried away with heroic madness that they fought against the Romans with a desperate valor after the city had been surrounded. Never upon this earth were there braver or more fanatical spirits than were those who were cooped up within those city walls. When they were weary with fighting the Romans, they turned their swords and their daggers against one another, being divided into sects and parties who hated each other with the utmost fury. Jerusalem was a cauldron, a boiling pot, seething full of all manner of evil, mischief and misery. The land was devoured before the Roman armies. Everybody seemed to be either driven from the country, or else to be left dead around the city walls. They crucified the Jews in such numbers that they left off doing it because they could find no more wood upon which to nail them! Those who were taken captive were sold for slaves till a penny was refused as their price—they literally sold them for a pair of shoes! The precious sons of God, as the Prophet said, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, cracked and broken—and only worthy to be thrown on the dunghill.

But all the time—the most awful time, perhaps, that any nation ever endured—the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ were altogether unharmed! It is recorded that they fled to the little city of Pella, were quiet according to their Master's command and not a hair of their head perished. Indeed, it was to them a time of redemption, for the persecution which the Jews had carried on against them had been exceedingly cruel, but now there was a pause. The Jews' miseries were so great that they had no care nor thought for the poor Christians! They, at least, were secure—they looked up and lifted up their heads, for their Master's prophecy was verified—and the full force of the curse fell upon those who had cried to Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children."

Now, dear Friends, it will be just so at the last. I am not about to enter into any prophecies of what is yet to be, but here are the Master's own words—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great Glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near."

That is my subject, dear Friends, and we will consider, first, the terrible time in which this precept is to be carried out. "Look up, and lift up your heads." Secondly, the remarkable precept itself. "Look up, and lift up your heads." And thirdly, the encouraging parable which is given in order to induce us to look up and lift up our heads. "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know, yourselves, that summer is now near. So likewise, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near."

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE TIME in which we are told to look up and lift up our heads.

It is evidently to be a time of fearful national trouble. And if such times should ever come in our days—if there should ever arrive times that are worthy to be compared with the destruction of Jerusalem—here is the Master's word to us, "When you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end will not come immediately." Should great wars occur, as they certainly will, there is nothing in them to terrify the Christian! Should they even come to your own doors, it is not for Believers in Christ ever to be the victims of a scare. Whatever may happen, what is there for them to fear? The Savior gives them this precept for a time when it will be impossible for them to carry it out unless it is by faith in Him—"Look up, and lift up your heads." Whatever chastisements shall befall the nations, you shall be secure in following to the full, the principles of peace that your Master has enjoined upon you.

Further, this precept is given, not only in times of fearful national trouble, but also in times of awful physical signs and wonders in the world—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." It may be a season of preternatural darkness, or the solar system may be disturbed so that the stars of Heaven, which have been fixed for centuries, shall fall like unripe fruit from the trees, or as the withered leaves of autumn are scattered by the stormy blast. You know that when there is some phenomenon such as no one has ever seen before, how frightened people are! But suppose there should be visible in the heavens manifestations such as have never been seen, yet even at such times the children of God are to look up and lift up their heads! And if they should not merely be in the heavens, but if the earth, also, should shake and tremble—if that which is supposed to be most stable should become most fickle—yet even then we are to look up and lift

up our heads.

And if the sea and the waves thereof should roar in a manner altogether unusual, so that landsmen should hear the noise afar off, or if, being out at sea, ourselves, the waves should run mountains high and the vessel should threaten to sink to the bottom, yet this is still the precept for the worst of times that are supposable—"When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads." Even in such a trying time as that, take up the language of the 46th Psalm and say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

"Nature cannot rise to that height," says one. No, I know it cannot— but Divine Grace can! "I cannot rise to it," says one. Perhaps you cannot, but there is One who can raise you up to it, and it is He, Himself, who bids you to rise. "Then," says Jesus, "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads."

This terrible time which our Lord describes is, in addition, a time of universal alarm—"Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken." You know that fear is contagious—when one person trembles, many begin to feel the same sort of tremor. And when all the people, wherever we shall go, at home or abroad, shall be in distress—when everywhere the hearts of men shall seem to die within them, or turn, as it were. to stone, so that they cannot act or move, like those who guarded the tomb of Christ, when they saw Him rise, were as dead men—if it should ever come to that and there should be a general panic, then you who have Christ for your Master, God for your Father, eternity for your heritage and Heaven for your home—even then you may "look up, and lift up your heads."

You ask, perhaps, "How shall we do that?" You cannot do it without your Lord. With God, all things are possible. In Christ, you can do all things. Without Him you can do nothing. If you live away from your Lord and Master, in those days of terror that are yet to come, your hearts will quail for fear, and you will be like other men. If you run with them, you shall fear with them. If your strength is where their strength is, you shall be as weak as they are! But if you have learned to look up, why, even in those stormy times you shall keep to the habit of looking up! And if you have learned to lift your heads above the world, you shall keep to the habit of lifting up your heads! If your portion is in Heaven, it shall not be shaken when the earth rocks and reels to its very foundations. If your treasure is in Heaven, then your treasure shall not be lost.

If God is with you, you can stand between the very jaws of death, or in the center of Hell, itself, and feel no fear! With Christ by your side, you may be as calm amid the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds, as your Lord, Himself, is in His Glory. He can work even this in you if you but cast yourself on Him and live wholly to Him.

Once more, the time when we are to be thus calm and quiet, and to look up, and lift up our heads, is to be at the coming judgment. My dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever I might say to you about the calamities that are yet to come upon the earth. Whatever description I might give of wars, earthquakes and storms—if I were to make each word as black as night and each sentence as

sharp as a killing sword—yet could I not fully describe the final scene when the Lord, Himself, shall come in all the pomp and splendor of the last dread assize! No human tongue can tell, as no human heart can imagine the terrors of that tremendous day, especially the sight of the once-crucified King when He appears seated upon His Great White Throne, and when the summons shall ring out—

"Come to judgment! Come to judgment, come away!"

when the grave shall not conceal the unnumbered dead, nor even the depths of the ocean suffice for a hiding place from Him that sits upon the Throne, for all shall be gathered before Him! Every eye shall see Him and they, also, that pierced Him. You will be there, my Friend! You will be there as certainly as you are here!

O you who are without Christ, all the fear and dread you have ever had in this life will be as nothing compared with the alarm and terror of that day! Your fears, when you have been laid low with fever, and have been near to death's door, will be but as child's play compared with what you will feel at that tremendous day which is soon to come! Yet Christ says to His people, concerning even that time of terror, "Look up, and lift up your heads." There is nothing for you who have put your trust in Him, to ever fear! It is your Judge who is coming, but He comes to acquit you and to exhibit you to the assembled universe clad in His own righteousness which you already wear. He who is coming is your Lord, your Friend, your Bridegroom! He who has sworn to deliver you is coming to call your body from the grave and to raise you up to dwell together with Him forever. That day of Christ's appearing shall be to you a morning of the ringing out of harps and a time of joyous shouts and blissful songs—

"There shall be weeping, there shall be weeping, At the Judgment Seat of Christ,"

but not for you who are in Him! It shall be your joy day, your wedding day, the brightest day in all your history!—

"When these things begin to come to pass, Then look up, and lift up your heads."

I must leave this first point concerning the terrible time when this precept is to be carried out by reminding you that when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come, the heavens shall tell us—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." The earth shall tell us, for upon the earth there shall be "distress of nations, with perplexity." The sea shall tell us, for the sea and the waves thereof shall roar. Men shall tell us, for men's hearts shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. And then, as all these voices shall proclaim His coming, our own eyes shall tell us, for they shall see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great Glory." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." And in anticipation of that glorious day, each Believer can say with the Patriarch Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

II. Now I come to THE REMARKABLE PRECEPT itself—"Then look up, and lift up your heads."

My dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some Christian people who seem to think that it is almost wicked to look up, and lift up their heads. When they come before God, their cry is, "Lord, have

mercy upon us, miserable sinners." Well, but surely a true child of God gets above that condition! He is a sinner, it is true and, as far as he is a sinner, he is unhappy, but still, he has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit! He has been washed in the blood of the Lamb! He has been adopted into the family of God—surely there is some nobler note for him to reach than that doleful dirge! If, amid plague and pestilence, or amid earthquakes and storms and wars, we are to look up, and lift up our heads, that ought to be our daily attitude—

"Why does your face, you humble souls, Those mournful colors wear? What doubts are these that waste your faith, And nourish your despair?"

Listen to your Lord's gracious command—"Look up, and lift up your heads." What does this precept mean? First, it implies an absence of fear. "Perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment." He that fears is not made perfect in love. What cause has a Christian for fear? What is there that can harm the man whom God loves? Will He trample on His child, or allow anyone else to hurt him? No, for "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." The sun and moon and stars. The earth and the seas. Wars and pestilences all work together for good to God's dear children. Let us therefore cast out all fear!

This precept, surely, also means the removal of all grief. While the Christian is here, there will always be more than enough to make him grieve as a man, but there will also always be Grace in Christ to wipe every tear away. We are born to grief, but then, we are also born again, so we must not give way to weeping more than is right. We must not be overburdened with sorrow, lest we become like a drunk man. It is as evil to be drunk out of the bitter cup of affliction as out of the sweet cup of sinful pleasure. Let us put away our sorrow, grief and misery, and say with the Prophet Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on 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."

"Look up, and lift up your heads." This precept of our Lord seems to me to be very wonderful because it does not merely mean that there is to be in Believers no fear and no grief, but that even in the worst times we are to show the signs of joy. This expression implies to me signs and tokens of an outward kind—"Look up, and lift up your heads." Our Lord seems to say to us, "Now fly your flags and ring your bells! Let your hearts be exceedingly glad—so joyous that those who look at you cannot help seeing your happiness. "Look up, and lift up your heads." Let there be no looking down because the earth is quaking and shaking, but let there be a looking up because you are going to rise from it! No looking down because the graves are opening—why should you look down? You will quit the grave, never more to die. "Lift up your heads." The time for you to hang your heads, like bulrushes, is already over and will certainly be over when the Lord is coming and your redemption draws near! Therefore, "look up, and lift up your heads."

It will be an amazing sight when Jesus comes again! It must have been an amazing sight when Jerusalem was destroyed, but the true Christian knew all that was going to happen. And all that did happen, terrible as it was, was only a confirmation of his faith and a fulfillment of his Lord's prophecies. So shall it be when, at the Last Great Day, we walk among the sons of men calmly and serenely! They will marvel at us. They will say to us, "How is it that you are so joyous? We are all alarmed, our hearts are failing us for fear." And we shall take up our wedding hymn, our

marriage song, "The Lord is come! The Lord is come! Hallelujah!" The burning earth shall be the flaming torch to light up the wedding procession! The quivering of the heavens shall be, as it were, but as the dancing of the feet of angels in those glorious festivities! And the booming and crashing of the elements shall, somehow, only help to swell the outburst of praise to God, the Just and Terrible, who is to us our exceeding joy!

I cannot speak as I would upon this glorious theme, but I think I catch some of our Master's meaning when He said, "Then look up, and lift up your heads." Did He not mean that then, and always, Christians are to be filled with an inward peace and with a holy expectancy mixed with it? Whatever happens, all is well with the righteous! I know not what is to be, nor do I wish to know, but I do know that all is well and that all shall be well forever and ever. "Look up, and lift up your heads," Beloved, for it is better than before. There is something brighter and more joyful coming than we have ever yet known! All our earthly bliss is but as the vestibule of our eternal delights. The Lord's Kingdom is yet small and feeble, apparently, but it is to be world-wide and He, Himself, is to be manifested in His Glory! Therefore, let us look up, and lift up our heads. Look up for Him who is coming! Look up for Him who has already come! Lift up your eyes to the hills, from where your help comes "Look up, and lift up your heads." It seems to me as if the text, itself, is quite enough to make you march to the strains of martial music straight away to victory! Come, let us be a band of men and women who fully trust our Lord and, who henceforth say farewell to doubt and trembling! "Look up, and lift up your heads."

III. Our text finishes with A PARABLE TO ENCOURAGE US TO OBEY THE PRECEPT—"Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is near."

First, notice the signs mentioned in this parable. Summer is the time of the bursting of buds, the unfolding of flowers, the forming and ripening of the fruit. There may come many a shower in the spring, but that will not hinder the arrival of summer—it will rather help summer to come! It may be cold and chill beneath the black cloud that hovers over us for a while, but that will not hinder summer. "April showers bring forth May flowers." All these things are the tokens of the summer's coming. So, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in trouble, expect that you are going to have a blessing! When you are passing through a great trial, look out, for there is another sign that summer is coming! Do not fear to look up, and lift up your heads, for—

"The clouds you so much dread Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head."

"Look up, and lift up your heads." I wish we could get into the habit of believing that every time of need, every time of pain, every time of depression is but the commencement of a season of blessing! "Though now, for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations," remember that the Lord's objective in this experience is "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Therefore, as you look at the black buds on the tree of your life, say to yourself, "I wonder what bright flower is coming out there!" Look at the dark bulbs, without any beauty at all in them, which we put into the ground, yet the flowers which come out of them are charming and fragrant. So, when God plants some black bulbs in the garden of your soul, do not cry out because of their ugliness, but look for the flowers that shall, in due time, appear—and expect something beautiful from God's sowing!

Yes, and if again the heavens should be darkened, the earth should shake, the sea should roar, kingdoms should be dissolved and pestilence should slay its myriads, yet still "look up, and lift up your heads." Your Master bids you do so! He, the Crucified, who made a coronet of beauty out of the crown of thorns. He who is bedecked today with jewels which are the scars of His own suffering. He whose very Glory it is that He once died—He it is who would have you see, in all the trials of the present hour, tokens of the benediction that is yet to come! Therefore, "look up, and lift up your heads."

Further, the signs mentioned in this parable tell of certainty. When the trees are in bloom, hastening to display their leaves, there may come a frost, there may come many cold days—there will certainly come rough winds and clouds—but the summer will come along in due time. Every day will bring it nearer. All the devils in Hell cannot keep the spring from going on to summer, it is not possible! The forces of nature are so ordained by God that the trees must come to their perfection at the crowning of the year and, in like manner, the signs that God gives to His people, though they may not always seem promising, are very sure.

Have you trusted in Christ? Then, to you He has given peace and joy! Are you still trusting Him and will you continue to hang only upon Him and to trust wholly in Him? Then, your righteousness shall break forth as brightness and your salvation as a lamp that burns! The Lord will light your candle. The night may be very long, but the morning must come when the Sun of Righteousness shall rise upon you with healing in His wings, and you shall "go out and grow up as the calves of the stall." As for the coming of our Divine Master and the triumph of everything that is right and true. As to the fulfillment of His Covenant and the perfecting of all His everlasting purposes. As for the salvation of His elect and redeemed ones, Heaven and earth may pass away, but His Word shall not pass away till every jot and tittle of it shall be fulfilled! God is with you, God is in you—who can stand against Him? Trust in the Lord, even in the mighty God of Jacob, and you shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end! Go your way, and say, "All is well, for it is in my Father's hands; therefore will I look up, and lift up my head."

And as for you who are not His people, begin to look out for a place to hide yourselves, for Christ is coming! O you earthworms, begin to look for the holes into which you will wish to creep to hide yourselves! I wish that you would so look out for a hiding place that you would find one in that Man who presents Himself as the best hiding place for every sinner who will trust Him. God bring you all to find refuge in Christ! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Luke 21:1-38.

Luke 1:1-80; Luke 2:1-52; Luke 3:1-38; Luke 4:1-44; Luke 5:1-39; Luke 6:1-49. And He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts

into the treasury. And He saw, also, a certain poor widow casting in her two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say to you, that this poor widow has cast in more than they all: for all these have, of their abundance, cast in to the offerings of God: but she of her penury has cast in all the living that she had. And as some spoke of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which you behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. This was literally true of the Temple at Jerusalem

and, today, there remains nothing of it. It is also true of all earthly buildings and of all earthly things. However firm they appear to be, as though they might outlast the centuries, themselves, yet the things which are seen are temporal and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, they shall all melt into thin air and pass away. "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

7. And they asked Him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? Those questions are always being asked. They are being asked at this very day about Christ's Second Coming. They shall have no answer, for Christ, Himself, assures us that as the Son of Man, He knew not the day nor the hour of His own coming. As the Son of God He knew all things, but as a Man like ourselves, He was willing to be a know-nothing upon that point.

8. And He said, Take heed that you are not deceived: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: go you not therefore after them. This passage refers, in the first place, to the siege of Jerusalem and in its second and yet fuller meaning, to the coming of the Lord. It looks to me that our Lord regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as "the beginning of the end," the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And, as before the destruction of Jerusalem there were many false Christs, so will there be more of them the nearer the end of the world shall be. This shall be to us one of the tokens of our Lord's speedy appearing, but we shall not be deceived thereby. "Take heed that you are not deceived: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draws near: go you not therefore after them."

9. But when you shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but the end will not come immediately. Everywhere throughout the Scriptures there is this double message of our Lord—"Watch, for I may come at any moment. Expect Me to come, and to come soon; yet never be terrified as though the time were immediately at hand, for there are certain events which must occur before My Advent." How to reconcile these two thoughts, I do not know and I do not care to know. I would like to be found in that condition which consists in part of watching and in the other part of patiently waiting and working till Christ appears.

10, 11. Then said He to them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great sights shall there be from Heaven. Someone says, perhaps, "All this we have had, times without number, yet Christ has not come." Just so, for these signs are not sent to minister to our curiosity, but to keep us always on the watch. And whenever we mark these earthquakes, wars, famines and pestilences, then are we to think, "Behold, He comes," and watch the more earnestly! You know how it is often with the man who is very sick. It is reported that he cannot last long. You call many times, yet he is still living—do you, therefore, conclude that he will not die? No, but you more certainly expect that he will soon be gone. So is it with Christ's Second Advent. He bids us note the signs of His coming, and yet, when some of those signs appear, He does not come—all this is to keep us still on the alert watching for Him. Even in His own day, when He so spoke that His servants expected Him to come at once, yet He also added words from which they might fairly judge that He would not come directly.

12-16. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it shall turn out for you an occasion for testimony. Settle it, therefore, in your hearts, not to meditate before what you shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. Nowadays, the fashion is always to meditate, and think, and excogitate a gospel for yourself. To be a thinker—that is the very crown of perfection to some minds—but it is not so according to our Master's mind! His servants are to speak not their own thoughts, but His thoughts! If they will keep to His Gospel, He will give them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. We are to be the repeaters of a message which is given to us, not the manufacturers of tidings! There is to be an exhibition of inventions very soon and it is quite right and proper that there should be, but I pray that none of us may ever be the inventors of a new Gospel, or of new doctrines, or of new systems of theology, but, on the contrary, let us settle it in our hearts that we will speak Christ's Word all our days! And if thereby we are brought into trouble, we will depend upon Him to give us a mouth and wisdom which all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16. And you shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. How true that has been many a time! For how long a period the saints were martyred! And the days of martyrdom are not yet over.

17, 18. And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. During all the terrible siege of Jerusalem, it is believed that not one Christian perished, for God took special care of the followers of His Son. They were the most hated of all men, yet nobody could touch them! None of them took up arms, for it was contrary to their religion as, indeed, if we are Christians, it is contrary to our religion to resist evil, but we are to bear and endure. The early Christians did so—and because of their very defenselessness, they were safe under the guardian care of the Lord their God!

19-24. In your patience possess you your souls. And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is near. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains and let them which are in the midst of it depart; and let not them that are in the countries enter into it. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled. And it is so even to this day. Here is another instance in which the Lord bade His people expect His coming and yet, at the same time, told them that He would not come so long as Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles. "Until the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled" means the time when the Messiah shall gather in those Gentiles to Himself, for, when He shall appear, they shall look on Him whom they have despised, and turn to Him whom they have so long rejected.

26. And there shall be signs in the sun—As there were at the destruction of Jerusalem, and as there will be at the Second Coming of Christ. We have had a rehearsal of that coming in the destruction of the favored city, but the grand event, itself, who shall rightly speak of it?

25-27. And in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's heart failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see.—Whether they wish to see Him or not, "then shall they see"—

27-32. The Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near. And He spoke to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they are budding, you see and know of yourselves that summer is now near. So you, also, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near. Verily I say to you, This generation shall not pass away, till all is fulfilled. As I understand it, for the first time. And afterwards it shall be fulfilled again. It is a prophecy that bears two meanings—an outer and an inner. It has been fulfilled once and it shall soon be fulfilled again.

33, 34. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.— Please notice that "cares of this life" are put down with over-eating and over-drinking, for men can be intoxicated and surfeited with care, either the care of getting, or the care of keeping, or the care of spending, or the care of losing. Any of these cares may cause a surfeit and a drunkenness. Therefore, "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life."—

34. And so that day come upon you unawares. All that you can see in this world, you are to regard as being doomed to destruction. That destruction commenced, so to speak, when Jerusalem fell beneath the Roman sword. Everything earthly is doomed. You are living, not in your eternal mansions, but you are living a makeshift life. You are passing through a wilderness, you are pilgrims, you are sojourners—this is not your rest. Do not get to love this world, or to be taken up with it. Do not strike your roots into it—you are not to dwell here and to always live here. You are walking among shadows—regard them as such. Hug them not to your bosom. Feed not your souls upon them, lest, when that Day comes, before whose coming all of them shall melt away, you shall be filled with amazement and shame.

35-37. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man. And in the daytime He was teaching in the Temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mountain that is called the Mount of Olives. You know what He did there, for—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air, Witnessed the fervor of His prayer."

Jesus always practiced what He preached. He said to His disciples, "Watch, therefore, and pray always," so He, Himself, both watched and prayed.

38. And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the Temple, to hear Him. May we all be willing, not only to hear Him, but also to heed what He says! Amen.

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PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE

OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 21,33 #2636 - The Perpetuity of the Gospel

THE PERPETUITY OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 2636

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 20, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1882.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away."

Luke 21:33.

LAST Lord's-Day morning I preached upon the perpetuity of the Law of

God, [Sermon #1660, Volume 28—The Perpetuity of the Law of God—read/download the entire sermon free of charge athttp://www.spurgeongems.org] basing my remarks upon our Lord's words, "For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all is fulfilled." Tonight, I am not going to speak of the Law, but of the Gospel. And, by the term, "the Gospel," I mean the summary of all that our Lord Jesus Christ spoke when He was here below. Of that Gospel it may be said, as He, Himself, said of the Law, that not one jot or tittle of it shall pass away till all is fulfilled. The Gospel of Christ is not merely the Gospel of yesterday, but, like Christ Himself, it is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." It is not a Gospel simply for this age, or for some other age, a Gospel which shall, by-and-by, be worn out and cast aside. But when yon blue heavens shall be folded up, like a worn-out vestment, the Gospel shall still be as powerful as ever. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," says our Lord, "but My Words shall not pass away."

I. Without further preface, I remark, first, that THE WORDS OF JESUS MUST STAND, COME WHAT MAY. If you accept the testimony of Christ concerning His own Words—and you who are His followers will not question anything that He says—then this is certain, that the Words of Jesus must stand forever, come what may.

The major change of Heaven and earth passing away includes all lesser changes, but whatever alteration may come before the last great change, Christ's Words shall still stand The world gets more civilized—so I am told, though, when I read the newspapers, I am not quite sure of it. The world gets more intelligent—so I am told, though, when I read the magazines—I mean, the first-class quarterlies—I am not certain that it is so, for, in that direction, the ignorance appears to me to become greater every day. I mean the ignorance among the learned and scientific men, who

seem to me, in their discoveries, to wander continually further and further, not only from that which is revealed and Infallible, but also from that which is rational and truthful.

But still, the world does alter and, according to its own notion, it is getting wonderfully near perfection! Was there ever such a century as the

Volume 45 1nineteenth? Was there ever such a period of time since the world began? What is there that we are not doing? Lighting ourselves by electricity, speaking by means of the lightning, traveling by steam—what an amazing people we are! Yes, yes, and we are going to do much greater things than these, no doubt. And many matters which are now reckoned as mere dreams will probably because accomplished facts in a few generations! But after these marvels have all come and gone, the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ will still abide—they will not pass away! Fashion follows fashion, systems succeed systems, everything beneath the moon is like the moon, it waxes and wanes and is always on the change! But come whatever change there may, even if the human race should reach that wonderful development which some prophesy for it, yet still, the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ shall not pass away. And when the greatest alteration of all shall take place and this present dispensation shall come to an end—and all material things shall be consumed with fire and be destroyed—yet, even then, there shall remain above the ashes of the world and all that is therein, the imperishable Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, for, as Peter says, "The Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

Why is it that Christ's Words will last in this way? I answer, first, because they are Divine. That which is Divine will endure. All God's works will not last forever, but His Words will. He will never retract anything that He has said. Even Baalim had Light of God enough to declare. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" God has never had, as our common saying puts it, to "eat His own words," nor will He! And Christ has never had to retract anything that He has uttered. All His life, He had not even once to make an apology and say, "I spoke too fast, or too warmly, or somewhat inaccurately." Everything that He said has stood and shall stand because the Divinity that is in it makes it everlasting!

Again, the Words of Christ must stand because they are the Revelation of the innermost heart of God. This great world, and the sun, and moon, and stars, reveal God—but not as fully and as clearly as the Son of God reveals Him. The Incarnate Word is the most grand manifestation of Deity and the Words of that Eternal Word are the Revelation of the purpose of God which He formed in His Infinite mind before He made the world. That which, in the secret counsels of eternity was planned—that which—

"Ere sin was born, or Satan fell,"

was devised in the heart of the Most High—is revealed to us, as far as it may be revealed, in the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's essential purposes cannot be altered—they must all be fulfilled. His eternal plan was formed in the foresight of all generations that shall exist, so it must stand unchanged and, inasmuch as those purposes and that plan are closely connected with the Words of Christ and, indeed, are made known to us by His Words, therefore the Words of Christ must stand forever.

Further, the Words of Christ must live even when Heaven and earth have passed away because they are pure Truth of God. Everything that is absolutely and purely true must be abiding and enduring. See how long solid silver lasts. You may buy plated goods for use in your house, but, after a time, in the process of wearing you begin to see the baser metal underneath. But if you have real silver, hall-marked, it will last your lifetime. David truly said, "The Words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Their surface does not wear off and reveal the dross beneath, for there is none! All is pure throughout. Impurity breeds decay—error is corruption—every evil thing carries within it the seeds of its own death. But God's Truth has no corruption in it. It is the living and incorruptible Seed which, therefore, lives and abides forever. That which is perfectly pure will not ferment because it contains within itself no germs of decay. Nor shall it pass away, but it shall live forever. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke nothing but pure, unalloyed Truth—the very Truth of God and, therefore, it shall stand fast forever.

And that Christ's Words shall live eternally, we do believe, again, because no power can prevent it. What power is there that can prevent Christ's Words from being triumphant? Do you hear the roar from the pit of Hell as that question is asked? The devil and his legions of fallen spirits say that they will prevent the triumph of the Words of Christ and, whereas He has declared that His Kingdom shall come, they conspire to prevent its coming. But Christ has already broken the head of the dragon, He has trampled the old serpent beneath His feet and His Omnipotence is greater than Satan's potency. The devil may be mighty, but Christ is Almighty, and Hell shall suffer dire defeat at the hand of the Crucified Savior! As for the wicked men upon this earth, they often league themselves together and take counsel "against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." You know how futile are all their efforts, for the Psalmist says, "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak to them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."

There is no power that can effectually resist the Words of Christ. "Where the word of a king is, there is power," but where the Word of God is, there is Infinite power! What He says must be done. Before He said, "Let there be light," there was not a spark amid all earth's gloom that could help to make the day! There was nothing lying here that could have created the light and yet the darkness fled before that fiat of God! And so, today, if there is nothing on earth to help the fulfillment of Christ's Word, He has said to this poor dark world, "Let there be light," and that light, which He has kindled, is growing brighter and brighter—and shall increase unto the perfect day. O devils in Hell, can you blot out that light? Impossible! Christ's Word must stand!

And yet once more, Christ's Word must stand because His honor is involved in its permanence. If He had to alter anything He said, it would be manifest that He had made mistakes which He must rectify. I often get books in which there is a slip of paper containing errata fastened at the beginning. They are said to be printers' blunders, but I should not wonder if they are also the mistakes of the writer. But there they are and I have to take a pencil and make these corrections in the volume. There are no errata in the Words of Christ, nor can there be any corrections in anything that He has said. David's declaration applies to all the Words of Jesus. "The Law of the Lord is perfect." Christ's Words are all they should be, no less and no more, and cursed shall that man be who shall add to or take from them! There cannot be any alteration in them, for that would be to dishonor Christ's wisdom. Alteration, indeed! That would make it appear that Christ trifled

while He was here, or that He said what He must necessarily unsay and that He was, after all, but an experimenter as to truth, getting as near it as He could and afterwards correcting His mistakes, like a physician who does not understand a disease and who gives a medicine which drives his patient too far one way, and then gives him another drug which brings him back again, but never completely cures him! Christ never has to act in that fashion. He knew what He meant and He said what He meant—and that which He said, and that which He meant shall stand even when, like withered figs that drop from the tree the stars shall fall from their places, the sun shall be turned into blood and the moon shall become black as a sackcloth of hair! It must be so and, therefore, all you who believe in Jesus, believe firmly in this double declaration that He has made, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away."

II. Now, secondly, THIS DECLARATION APPLIES TO ALL CHRIST'S WORDS—not merely to some of them, but to all, for it is left with an intentional indefiniteness which makes it refer to all that He said—"My Words shall not pass away."

This declaration applies, then, to the Doctrinal teaching of Christ. Whatever Doctrine Christ taught, either Himself, personally, or by His Apostles guided by the Spirit of God, is definite, distinct, immovable Truth of God. There are many ministers, nowadays, who think that they must shift their doctrinal landmarks and there are others who have no landmarks at all. They believe something, or everything, or nothing—it is difficult to tell which—and their common cry is, "We must be charitable!" I have known many people who were willing to be charitable with other people's money, and I have known others who are charitable with Doctrines that are not theirs to give away, for they are Christ's Doctrines— but these supposed custodians of them care so little for them that they offer to give them away in any quantity! But a faithful steward of Christ's Gospel will not do so. He who loves Christ and wishes to honor Him, keeps Christ's Words, and treasures them up!

I have heard of this body of divinity and that, but the body of divinity that I believe in is the body of Jesus Christ! And the true divinity, the real theology, is that wondrous Logos, the Incarnate Word of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! If we will take Jesus, and Him, only, to be our Leader, there are a great many ways that we shall never go—and there are a great many things which are done by different sects of professing Christians which we shall not do, as we cannot see that Christ ever did anything of the sort! And if He did not, neither will we. That is a good rule for all Christians which I saw in one of our Orphanage schoolrooms—"What would Jesus do?" There cannot be a better guide than that for Believers, for our text is true with regard to Doctrine, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away." I am often said to be a very old-fashioned, narrow-minded sort of person and I have not the slightest objection to the accusation. I certainly am not newfashioned and do not intend to be, for "the old is better" and, in theology, there is nothing new that is true, and nothing true that is new! The Truth of God is as old as the everlasting hills and to that I desire to keep even to the end, and I trust that you, also, will be of the same mind.

Next, we have the Words of Jesus, not only about Doctrine, but He has given us plain practical commands. The Master taught a wonderful system of ethics and to that system we are to cling with the same tenacity that should characterize our hold on the Doctrines that Christ taught. Brothers and Sisters, let us never get away from such a Divine teaching as this—"I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them

which despitefully use you and persecute you." Let us not only love one another, but let us seek to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to such as are of the household of faith. Be it our daily delight to cast out all malice and unkindness from our hearts, that the Law of Love may be fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You may depend upon it that there will never be any improvement upon the teaching of Christ! There have been some persons who have tried to improve upon it, but they have made a signal failure of all their attempts. His ethical teaching—His teaching of morals—has impressed even some of those who have not accepted His Doctrines, or even believed in His Divinity! They have been astonished at the purity, the holiness, the love which Jesus Christ inculcated in the Laws which He laid down for the guidance of His disciples.

But I must press on and remind you that the promises of Christ shall stand forever. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His promises shall not pass away. Is not that a blessed Truth of God? He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come along with you, then, poor laboring and heavy laden Souls, for He will give you rest! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but He will give you rest if you come to Him. And He has said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Come along with you, then! Obey both His commands—first, believe, and then be baptized, for, though Heaven and earth shall pass away—you shall be saved! There are many things which may be but actions. Like the phantom visions of a night, they may dissolve, but you shall be saved, that is a sure thing, that is certain beyond all question! The Lord Jesus has promised such great things to His people that I could keep you here all night if I were to try to repeat those gracious Words of promise which streamed out of His lips! Here is one of the sweetest of them—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." If you come to Him, He will not in any wise cast you out! He must, He will receive you! Heaven and earth may pass away, and they shall pass away in due time, but never shall a soul that comes to Jesus be rejected by Him! Oh, that many of you would avail yourselves of that promise this very hour!

Dear aged Friend, you are getting very feeble and you have passed through a great many changes, but that promise has not been altered all the while! Do you recollect when your mother told you about Christ when you were a curly-headed boy? "Ah," you say, "it is too late, now!" No, my dear Friend, no! Heaven and earth have not passed away yet, and that promise has not passed away—you may still come to Christ, so come and welcome, for it is still written, "He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Trust His promise even now! Bow your head in the pew and silently seek the EverBlessed One and He will be found of you, for His Word is as sure to you as it was to me—as sure to you as it has been to tens of thousands who, in different times, have tried it and found that promise true!

But remember, also, that as every Word of promise from Christ shall stand, so shall every Word of prophecy. There is a whole Book of Revelation which I do not understand, but which I fully believe. I am very glad to find something in the Bible which I cannot comprehend, but which I may believe, for I do not call that faith which limits its belief to what it can understand. If you have any little children, you delight to see the way in which they trust you when they cannot make out what you are doing, though they are sure that you are doing right. I want you, dear Friends, to have just that kind of faith in the Book of Revelation—it is all true, although you cannot interpret all its mysteries.

And it will all come true— every word of it—in God's good time! The Lord shall come, the Lord shall reign, the Lord shall judge, the Lord shall justify and glorify His people— and the Lord shall bid the ungodly depart from Him under the curse. I pray that we may all be helped to believe every Word of it.

When I read the Bible, I like to read it in the spirit of the little boy whose mother told him something, but his schoolmates laughed at him for believing it. They asked him how he knew that it was true and he said that his mother told him so, and his mother never told a lie. They tried to prove that it could not be so, but he said, "Look here, my mother said so, and it is so if it isn't so." And if I find anything in the Word of God—and somebody with wonderful wisdom tells me that it cannot be so, he is quite sure of it—I laugh his "cannots" into oblivion and reply—"It is so if it isn't so! Your supposed proof is nothing to me! If God has said it, and all the tongues that ever wagged should deny it, I would still say, 'Let God be true and every man a liar.'" Hold then, dear Friends, to the Words of Christ even though you do not always understand them.

I must also remind you that every Word of threats that Jesus Christ has spoken is true. Oh, that we could have seen His face and heard the very tones of His voice! There must have been an inexpressible sweetness and an ineffable tenderness about the speech of Jesus Christ. All those who heard Him speak knew that He loved them. And the publicans and sinners, the poor pariahs, the off-casts, those who were scorned by everybody else, drew near to hear Him because they felt that there was sympathy towards them in that great heart of His. Yet, did you ever notice— you must have noticed it, that never man spoke such terrible words of threatening to the ungodly as this Man spoke? It was Jesus who spoke of the worm that never dies and of the fire that never shall be quenched! It was Jesus who spoke of destroying both body and soul in Hell! It was He who said many of the most terrible things about future punishment that were ever uttered, such as that parable of the rich man who "died and was buried; and in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

When you hear men trying to soften down the threats of the Scriptures, do not believe that love to souls suggests such a course of action— it often is the proof of true love that it can speak harsh things! If a man comes and tells you very pleasant things about yourself, beware of him— he is not your friend! But the man who can warn you, who can point out your fault and your folly—who can run the risk of losing your esteem by indicating your danger—that is the one who has a sincere affection for you! And a wise man will choose such a friend as that. Whatever anyone may think or say, there is not a terrible Word that ever fell from the Savior's lips which will not stand! Though you do not like it, you cannot alter it—it will not be selected by your likes or dislikes. "He that believes not shall be damned." You call that a hard saying? Regardless, it is true, or Christ would not have said it. It must have cost Him much inward anguish to utter such a sentence as that! It must have been a sort of mental crucifixion to Him to speak as He did about the terrors of the world to come. And you can be you sure that they are not less awful than He described, not less horrible than He depicted them! So, whatever any may say by way of toning down His threats, reject their lies, for Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Words of Christ shall not pass away.

III. Thirdly, and lastly, I want to show you that THIS TRUTH HAS A BEARING UPON US ALL.

First, I am sure that it has a relation to the preacher. My text innately concerns me and all who are called to be ministers of the Gospel. Dear Brothers, we have to preach the same Gospel that our Lord Jesus Christ preached, and no other. I am thankful that I do not know any other Gospel. Long ago I came to Paul's resolve and, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." I stick to that, and that is what all of us must do if we would please our Master! There is no progression in the Truth of God, itself. We progress in our knowledge of what Christ said, and in our understanding of it, but the Truths that He uttered remain just the same as they were in His days. You know that when your little children go down to the seaside, they build tiny castles and houses, and make gardens in the sand—but they are all washed away when the tide rolls over them. I should not like to preach a theology of the kind that is being constantly washed away, leaving me to start afresh with some more sand.

The Eddystone Lighthouse has stood gloriously, and the reason why another has to be built is because the rock has given way under it—the lighthouse, itself, is all right. We thank God that when we build upon what Christ says, we build on a Rock that will not give way under us! And if we are as steadfast as the old lighthouse, and not a stone of us will stir, we shall be perfectly justified by the equal steadfastness of that Truth of God upon which we build! There is no stirring that rock which is formed of what Christ said. The earth may not only quake, but melt. And the unpillared vault of Heaven that has stood so firm these many ages— even it shall come down with a crash! But no Word of Jesus Christ shall ever be dissolved or pass away! We must stick to the old Gospel, then. It sufficed for our fathers and our grandfathers, and it will suffice for our grandchildren if the world stands so long as to see them also grow up to preach it!

This text also has a bearing upon Church members, especially upon you very timid souls who, now and then, get afraid that everything good is coming to an end. I meet with some dear old souls, of both sexes, who are very nervous about what is coming to pass. They are afraid that dreadful times are coming. Yes, no doubt they are, but there is a sinful timidity which does dishonor to the power and Truth of God. There have always been, in all ages, some Latimers and Luthers who had no fear for God's Truth. People complained that they were very dogmatic but they did not care what was said about them—they were probably just as happy whatever the world said!

Luther had one very special friend among the German princes and someone asked the Reformer, "Suppose that he should withdraw his protection from you, where would you hide?" "Beneath the broad shield of Heaven," he answered. And Luther spoke wisely. He would not feel that he was dependent upon any man, but upon God alone. I wish, my poor trembling Friend, that you had something of his holy courage. Do not get into that doubting state of mind again! Heaven and earth shall pass away, so wait till you see them all going! And when they do go, just sit still and sing—

"Then should the earth's old pillars shake, And all the wheels of nature break, Our steady souls should fear no more, Than solid rocks when billows roar."

But, next, our text has a bearing on all Believers. Dear Friends, if Christ's Words shall never pass away, let us believe them to be true to ourselves. Are any of you persecuted? Do not give way for a single moment! Stand to your colors! Never be ashamed to acknowledge your Lord. Remember

how He said, "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forget the Lord your Maker, who has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and has feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy?" Hold you to Christ, whose Words shall never pass away. Are you very sick and weak, or are you getting very poor? Well, your health and your property, too, will pass away, but Christ's Words will never pass away. Are you dying? Christ's Words will never die or pass away—die with them in your heart! When I went, last week, to see one of the members of this Church who is very ill, I had a little of my own teaching given back to me. This dear Brother said to me, "Do you remember saying to us, years ago, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in You,' is a third-class carriage, but it is in the Gospel train, and it will take you to Heaven"? And you added, "Why do you not go in the firstclass carriage—'I will trust, and not be afraid'?" I commend that firstclass carriage to all of you! "I will trust, and not be afraid." Let faith expel fear and so travel to Heaven first-class! You well may do so, for there is no cause to be afraid.

If any of the Words of Christ could pass away with this wind, and that wind, and the other wind, oh, dear, what a card-house we would live in! But if they all stand firmly forever—as they do—then why and, therefore, should we indulge the slightest fear? One reason why some of you do not rest in Christ as you should is because you do not get right down flat on to His Words and trust wholly to them. You know what the slave said when his master asked him why he was so confident about salvation. He answered, "Massa, you try to stand, but Sam fall flat down on de promise, and when he is flat down on de promise, he can't fall any lower." Just so! Then fall flat on the promise and if you lie there, clinging and resting there, alone, then Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not the Words on which you are trusting!

Now, last of all, this is a word to sinners. What a message my text has for those of you who do not love Christ, those of you who are undecided! Christ's Words shall not pass away—what then? This is the only Gospel that you will ever hear—the last train is about to start. If you do not go by that, there is no other that will carry you to Heaven, "for there is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The Gospel will never change its character. Are any of you waiting till it does, like the countryman who said he would cross the river when all the water had run by? There will never be any easier way to Heaven than there is at this moment! I verily believe that some people, by delay, make the road to Heaven harder for themselves than it would otherwise be. If they are ultimately saved, it is more difficult for them to trust to Christ when they have been long delaying. Even mercy seems, sometimes, to act like Benjamin Franklin did when a man came into his shop to buy a book, but wasted the bookseller's time by his foolish delay. The man asked, "What is the price of this book, Sir?" "Four shillings," said Franklin. "It is rather high," said the man, "I will not take it." He waited about ten minutes and then he asked, "What now, really, will you take for that book?" "Five shillings," said Franklin. "No," said the customer, "you asked only four shillings just now." Franklin replied, "Sir, you have taken up ten minutes of my time attending to you, so that makes the price of the book one shilling more. It is five shillings, now, but if you do not buy it quickly, it will be more." There was some common sense in that mode of dealing! And you will truly find, in spiritual matters, that there is nothing gained by delay. But there is increased sin, increased hardness of heart and even an increased difficulty in yielding the soul to Christ!

The best time for any of you to come to Jesus is just now! You can never have a fairer opportunity than that which lies before you at the present moment. I am sure of it, because God's wisdom always picks the best opportunity—and what does God's wisdom say? "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." And yet again, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." If Christ's Words are to stand, there will be no other Gospel ever presented to you. If Christ's Words are to stand, why should you delay? Sometimes, when I have been returning from preaching away from here, I have seen people outside the theater as I have gone by, quite a crowd of them, and I have asked a friend why they were waiting. "Oh," he has answered, "they are expecting to get in at half price." Well, now, you cannot expect anything of that kind in the matter of salvation, for the original charge is "without money and without price," and it never can be any lower than it is now! Then why not come at once?

I came to Jesus Christ when I was 15 years of age and I wish I had come to Him 15 years before if it had been possible. Oh, that I should ever have lived a single minute without the sweet knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ! It is not a thing to be put off! God grant that you may no longer put it off! You have done too much of that already, so make haste and come to Christ this very moment!

Let me earnestly entreat you not to be looking out for some larger possible hope that may reach you after death. That is a terrible delusion! I pray you, risk not your soul upon it! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ's Words shall not pass away and, as I have already reminded you, He has said, "He that believes not shall be damned." And so he will be and there is nothing but that awful doom for him. You have your choice. If you trust in Christ, you shall have eternal glory. If you will not have Christ as your Savior, you shall have everlasting punishment. There is no other hope for you. I pray God to lead you to come to Christ at once. Oh, that you would not hesitate, since He invites you! Oh, that you would not tarry, since that were to insult Him! May His blessed Spirit now compel you to come in, that the house of His mercy may be filled! All you have to do is to trust Him! You have not to be doers until first you have trusted to what He has done. Then He will make you doers! Come empty! Come sinful! Come hard-hearted! Come just as you are! Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but, just as you find yourself, rest on Jesus! Fall flat on His promise! Depend upon the merit of His blood and the power of His ever-living plea! God help you, now, to do this, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Psalms 20:1-9; Psalms 2:1-12 The 20th Psalm is a prayer for the King—not only for David or Solomon, but for "great David's greater Son"—the true King of the Church. As if the Church saw Jesus going forth to His work, she offers up a prayer for Him.

Psalms 20:1. The LORD hear you in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend you. And so it came to pass, in that dread night in Gethsemane, Jesus "was heard in that He feared." The God of wrestling Jacob heard the cries of His dear Son and defended Him, or supported Him, as it is in the marginal reading.

2. Send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion. And you know how there came, from yonder heavenly Jerusalem, an angel strengthening Him. The celestial messenger stood at His side amid the gloom of the olive garden and brought Him comfort and succor from

God's right hand—

"His earnest prayers, His deepening groans Were heard before angelic thrones. Amazement wrapped the sky! 'Go, strengthen Christ!' the Father said! The astonished seraph bowed his head And left the realms on high."

3. Remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah. And so He did. There was never such acceptance given to any burnt sacrifice as was given to our Divine Lord when He offered up Himself!

4. Grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel. Is it not written, "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised"? Here, then, is a suitable prayer for you to present on behalf of the Lord Jesus—that God would grant Him according to His own heart and fulfill all His counsel!

5. We will rejoice in your salvation. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us make this verse true! And even if we have anything to sigh over, let us lay it aside while we now devote ourselves to the happy work of rejoicing in the glorious salvation of our Lord and King!

5-9. And in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfill all your petitions. Now know I that the LORD saves His anointed; He will hear him from His holy Heaven, with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen and stand upright. Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call. What a blessing it is that our King hears us when we call upon Him! He is full of sympathy with all His people, for, in the time of His sojourn on earth, He often knew what it was to plead with His Father. And as God heard Him, then, so does He, Himself, hear us. All glory be to His blessed name! The 21st Psalm views the King as having ended his battle and achieved his victory.

Psalms 21:1-2. The king shall joy in Your strength, O LORD; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah. God gave to Jesus the strength needed to accomplish the work which He came to do and He is daily giving Him to see of the travail of His soul that He may be satisfied.

3. For you meet him with the blessings of goodness. They go before Him like scouts or forerunners! Wherever Jesus comes, the blessings of goodness fly before Him to the sons of men.

3. You set a crown of pure gold on his head. Let us crown Him afresh, tonight, with our poor garlands of praise, while God sets a crown of pure gold upon His head!

4. He asked life of You, and You gave it to him, even length of days forever and ever. And because He lives, we shall also live! The Father has given Him to have life in Himself and hence He communicates that life to us who believe in Him.

5. His glory is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon him. Heaped it on Him. There is no one so worthy of honor as our Lord Jesus is! None are so majestic as the Man of Sorrows who once bowed His head to death on His people's behalf.

6. For You have made him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance. The Father rewards Him for all His service—"You have made Him most blessed forever." We cannot imagine how great is the joy of Christ as His Father smiles upon Him— "You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your Countenance."

7, 8. For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved. Your hand shall find out all Your enemies. Oh, what a wonderful prophecy that is! Christ's hand shall find out all His enemies. If they hide themselves, He shall discover them. If they cover themselves with chain armor, yet still His hand will find out their vulnerable parts and touch their very souls until they melt with fear! "Your hand shall find out all Your enemies." Are there any of these enemies of Christ here, tonight? If so, not only will His eyes find them out, but His hands will find them out, too.

8-13. Your right hand shall find out those that hate You. You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shall You destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against You: they imagined a mischievous device which they are not able to perform. Therefore shall You make them turn their back, when You shall make ready Your arrows upon Your strings against the face of them. Be you exalted, LORD, in Your own strength: so will we sing and praise Your power.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY

TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 22,14 #3107 - Christ and His Table Companions

CHRIST AND HIS TABLE COMPANIONS

NO. 3107

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when the hour was come, He sat down,

and the twelve Apostles with Him."

Luke 22:14.

THE outward ordinances of the Christian religion are but two—and

those two are exceedingly simple—yet neither of them has escaped human alteration. And, alas, much mischief has been worked and much of precious teaching has been sacrificed by these miserable perversions! For instance, the ordinance of Baptism, as it was administered by the Apostles, represented the burial of the Believer with Christ and his rising with his Lord into newness of life. Men had to exchange immersion for sprinkling and the intelligent Believer for an unconscious child—and so the ordinance is slain! The other sacred institution, the Lord's Supper, like Believers' Baptism, is simplicity itself. It consists of broken bread and wine poured out—these items being eaten and drunk at a festival—a delightful picture of the sufferings of Christ for us and of the fellowship which the saints have with one another and with Him. But this ordinance, also, has been tampered with by men. By some, the wine has been taken away altogether, or reserved only for a priestly caste. And the simple bread has been changed into a consecrated host. As for the table, the very emblem of fellowship in all nations—for what expresses fellowship better than surrounding a table and eating and drinking together? This, indeed, must be put away and an "altar" must be erected! And the bread and wine which were to help us to remember the Lord Jesus are changed into an "unbloody sacrifice," and so the whole thing becomes an unscriptural celebration instead of a holy institution for fellowship!

Let us be warned by these mistakes of others never either to add to or take from the Word of God so much as a single jot or tittle! Keep upon the foundation of the Scriptures and you stand safely, and have an answer for those who question you. Yes, and an answer which you may render at the bar of God! But once allow your own whim, or fancy, or taste, or your notion of what is proper and right to rule you, instead of the Word of God, and you have entered upon a dangerous course! And unless the Grace of God prevents, boundless mischief may ensue. The Bible is our standard authority—none may turn from it. The wise man says in Ecclesiastes, "I counsel you to keep the

King's commandment." We would repeat his advice and add to it the sage precept of the mother of our Lord, at Cana, when she said, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." We shall now ask you in contemplation to gaze upon the first celebration of the Lord's Supper. You perceive at once that there was no "altar" in that large upper room. There was a table. A table with bread and wine upon it, but no altar! And Jesus did not kneel—there is no sign of that—He sat down. I doubt not, after the Oriental mode of sitting, that is to say, by a partial reclining, He sat down with His Apostles. Now, He who ordained this Supper knew how it ought to be observed. And as the first celebration of it was the model for all others, we may be assured that the right way of coming to this Communion is to assemble around a table—and to sit or recline while we eat and drink together of bread and wine in remembrance of our Lord!

While we see the Savior sitting down with His 12 Apostles, let us enquire, first, what did this make them? Then, secondly, what did this imply? And, thirdly, what further may we legitimately infer from this?

I. First, then, we see the Great Master, the Lord, the King in Zion, sitting down at the table to eat and drink with His 12 Apostles—WHAT DID THIS MAKE THEM?

Note what they were at first. By His first calling of them they became His followers, for He said unto them, "Follow Me." That is to say, they were convinced by sundry marks and signs, that He was the Messiah and they, therefore, became His followers. Followers may be at a great distance from their leader and enjoy little or no communion with him, for the leader may be too great to be approached by the common members of his band. In the case of these disciples, their following was unusually close, for their Master was very condescending. But still, their communion was not always of the most intimate kind at first and, therefore, it was not at the first that He called them to such a festival as this Supper. They began with following and this is where we must begin. If we cannot enter as yet into closer association with our Lord, we may at least know His voice by His Spirit and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd. The most important way of following Him is to trust Him and then diligently to imitate His example. This is a good beginning and it will end well—for those who walk with Him today shall rest with Him hereafter—those who tread in His footsteps shall sit with Him on His Throne!

Being His followers, they came next to be His disciples. A man may have been a follower for a while and yet may not have reached discipleship. A follower may follow blindly and hear a great deal which he does not understand, but when he becomes a disciple, his master instructs him and leads him into truth. To explain, to expound, to solve difficulties, to clear away doubts and to make truth intelligible is the office of a teacher among his disciples. Now, it was a very blessed thing for the followers to become disciples, but still, disciples are not necessarily so intimate with their Master as to sit and eat with Him. Socrates and Plato knew many in the Academy whom they did not invite to their homes. My Brothers and Sisters, if Jesus had but called us to be His disciples and no more, we would have had cause for great thankfulness. If we had been allowed to sit at His feet and had never shared in such an entertainment as that before us, we ought to have been profoundly grateful. But now that He has favored us with a yet higher place, let us never be unfaithful to our discipleship! Let us daily learn of Jesus! Let us search the Bible to see what it was that He taught us and then, by the aid of His Holy Spirit, let us scrupulously obey! Yet there is a something beyond.

Being the Lord's disciples, the chosen ones next rose to become His servants which is a step in advance, since the disciple may be but a child, but the servant has some strength, has received some measure of training and renders somewhat in return. Their Master gave them power to preach the Gospel and to execute commissions of Grace—and happy were they to be called to wait upon such a Master and aid in setting up His Kingdom! My dear Brothers and Sisters, are you all consciously Christ's servants? If so, though the service may at times seem heavy because your faith is weak, yet be very thankful that you are servants at all, for it is better to serve God than to reign over all the kingdoms of this world! It is better to be the lowest servant of Christ than to be the greatest of men and remain slaves to your own lusts, or be mere menpleasers. His yoke is easy and His burden is light! The servant of such a Master should rejoice in his calling—yet there is something beyond even this.

Towards the close of His life, our Master revealed the yet nearer relation of His disciples and uttered words like these—"Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." This is a great step in advance. The friend, however humble, enjoys much familiarity with his friend. The friend is told what the servant need not know. The friend enjoys a communion to which the mere servant, disciple, or follower has not attained. May we know this higher association, this dearer bond of relationship! May we not be content without the enjoyment of our Master's friendship! "He that has friends must show himself friendly," and if we would have Christ's friendship, we must befriend His cause, His Truth and His people! He is a Friend that loves at all times—if you would enjoy His friendship, take care to abide in Him!

Now note that on the night before His Passion, our Lord led His friends a step beyond ordinary friendship. The mere follower does not sit at table with his leader. The disciple does not claim to be a fellow commoner with his master. The servant is seldom entertained at the same table with his lord. The befriended one is not always invited to be a guest. But here the Lord Jesus made His chosen ones to be His table companions. He lifted them up to sit with Him at the same table, to eat of the same bread and drink of the same cup with Himself. From that position He has never degraded them—they were representative men and where the Lord placed them, He has permanently placed all His saints! All the Lord's believing people are sitting, by sacred privilege and calling, at the same table with Jesus, for "truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." He has come into our hearts and He sups with us and we

Volume 54 3with Him! We are His table companions and shall eat bread with Him in the Kingdom of God!

II. So now we shall pass on, in the second place, to ask, WHAT DID THIS TABLE COMPANIONSHIP IMPLY?

It implied, first of all, mutual fidelity. This solemn eating and drinking together was a pledge of faithfulness to one another. It must have been so understood, or otherwise there would have been no force in the complaint, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." Did not this mean that because Judas had eaten bread with his Lord, he was bound not to betray Him, and so to lift up his heel against Him? This was the seal of an implied covenant—having eaten together, they were under bond to be faithful to one another! Now, as many of you as are really the servants and friends of Christ may know that the Lord Jesus, in eating with you at His table,

pledges Himself to be faithful to you. The Master never plays the Judas—the Judas is among the disciples. There is nothing traitorous in the Lord—He is not only able to keep that which we have committed to Him, but He is faithful and will do it. He will be faithful, not only as to the great and main matter, but also to every promise He has made! Know then, assuredly, that your Master would not have asked you to His table to eat bread with Him if He intended to desert you! He has received you as His honored guests and fed you upon His choicest food and thereby He does as good as say to you, "I will never leave you, come what may. And in all times of trial, depression and temptation, I will be at your right hand and you shall not be moved—and to the very last you shall prove My faithfulness and truth."

But, Beloved, you do not understand this Supper unless you are also reminded of the faithfulness that is due from you to your Lord, for the feast is common and the pledge mutual. In eating with Him, you pledge your faithfulness to the Crucified. Beloved, how have you kept your pledge during the past? You have eaten bread with Him and I trust that in your hearts you have never gone so far aside as to lift up your heel against Him—but have you always honored Him as you should? Have you acted as guests should have done? Can you remember His love to you and put your love to Him side by side with it—without being ashamed? From this time forth may the Holy Spirit work in our souls a jealous fidelity to the Well-Beloved which shall not permit our hearts to wander from Him, or suffer our zeal for His Glory to decline!

Again, remember that there is in this solemn eating and drinking together, a pledge of fidelity between the disciples, themselves, as well as between the disciples and their Lord. Judas would have been a traitor if he had betrayed Peter, or John, or James. So, when you come to the one table, my Brothers and Sisters, you must henceforth be true to one another. All bickering and jealousies must cease and a generous and affectionate spirit must rule in every bosom! If you hear any speak against those with whom you have communed, reckon that as you have eaten bread with them, you are bound to defend their reputations. If any railing accusation is raised against any Brother in Christ, reckon that his character is as dear to you as your own! Let a sacred Freemasonry be maintained among us, if I may liken a far higher and more spiritual union to anything which belongs to common life. You are members, one of another—see that you fervently love each other with a pure heart. Drinking of the same cup, eating of the same bread, you set forth before the world a token which I trust is not meant to be a lie. As it truly shows Christ's faithfulness to you, so let it as really typify your faithfulness to Christ and to one another!

In the next place, eating and drinking together was a token of mutual confidence. They, in sitting there together, voluntarily avowed their confidence in each other. Those disciples trusted their Master. They knew He would not mislead or deceive them. They also trusted each other, for when they were told that one of them would betray their Lord, they did not suspect each other, but each one asked, "Lord, is it I?" They had much confidence in one another and the Lord Jesus, as we have seen, had placed great confidence in them by treating them as His friends. He had even trusted them with the great secret of His coming sufferings and death! They were a trustful company who sat at that Supper table. Now, Beloved, when you gather around this table, come in the spirit of implicit trustfulness in the Lord Jesus. If you are suffering, do not doubt His love, but believe that He works all things for your good. If you are vexed with cares, prove your confidence by leaving them entirely in your Redeemer's hands. It will not be a festival of fellowship to you if you come here with suspicions about your Master. No, show your confidence as you eat of the

bread with Him. Let there also be a brotherly confidence in each other. Grievous would it be to see a spirit of suspicion and distrust among you. Suspicion is the death of fellowship! The moment one Christian imagines that another thinks badly of him, though there may not be the slightest truth in that thought, yet straightway the root of bitterness is planted! Let us believe in one another's sincerity, for we may rest assured that each of our Brothers and Sisters deserves to be trusted more than we do. Turn your suspicions within and if you must suspect, suspect your own heart! But when you meet with those who have communed with you at this table, say within yourself, "If such can deceive me and, alas, they may, then will I be content to be imposed upon rather than entertain perpetual mistrust of my fellow Christians."

A third meaning of the assembling around the table is this, hearty fraternity. Our Lord, in sitting down at the table with His disciples, showed Himself to be one with them, a Brother, indeed. We do not read that there was any order of priority by which their seats were arranged. Of course, if the Grand Chamberlain at Rome had arranged the table, he would have placed Peter at the right hand of Christ—and the other Apostles in graduated positions according to the dignity of their future bishoprics! But all that we know about their order is this—that John sat next to the Savior and leaned upon His bosom. And that Peter sat a good way off—we feel sure he was because it is said that he "beckoned" unto John. If he had sat next to him, he would have whispered to him—but he

Volume 54 5beckoned to him—and so he must have been some way down the table, if, indeed, there was any "down" or "up" in the arrangement of the guests. We believe the fact was that they sat there on a sacred equality— the Lord Jesus, the Elder Brother among them—and all else arranged according to those words, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." Let us feel, then, in coming to the table again at this time, that we are linked in ties of sacred relationship with Jesus Christ who is exalted in Heaven, and that through Him our relationship with our fellow Christians is very near and intimate.

Oh, that Christian brotherhood were more real! The very word, "brother," has come to be ridiculed as a piece of hypocrisy and well it may, for it is mostly used as a cant phrase and, in many cases means very little. But it ought to mean something. You have no right to come to that table unless you really feel that those who are washed in Jesus' blood have a claim upon the love of your heart and the activity of your benevolence! What? Are you to live together forever in Heaven and will you show no affection for one another here below? It is your Master's new command that you love one another—will you disregard it? He has given this as the badge of Christians—"By this shall all men know that you are My disciples"—not if you wear a gold cross, but—"if you have love, one to another." That is the Christian's badge of his being, in very truth, a disciple of Jesus Christ! Here, at this table, we find fraternity. Whoever eats of this sacred Supper declares himself to be one of a brotherhood in Christ, a brotherhood striving for the same cause, having sincere sympathy, being members of each other and all of them members of the body of Christ! God make this to be a fact throughout Christendom even now, and how will the world marvel as it cries, "See how these Christians love one another!"

But this table companionship means even more—it signifies common enjoyment. Jesus eats and they eat the same bread. He drinks and they drink of the same cup. There is no distinction in the food items. What does this mean? Does it not say to us that the joy of Christ is the joy of His

people? Has He not said, "That My joy might reMal. in you, and that your joy might be full"? The very joy that delights Christ is that which He prepares for His people! You, if you are a true Believer, have sympathy in Christ's joy—you delight to see His Kingdom come, His Truth advanced, sinners saved, Grace glorified, holiness promoted, God exalted—and this also is His delight! But, my dear Brothers and Sisters and fellow professors, are you sure that your chief joy is the same as Christ's? Are you certain that the mainstay of your life is the same as that which was His meat and His drink, namely, to do the will of the Heavenly Father? If not, I am afraid you have no business at this table! But if it is so and you come to the table, then I pray that you may share the joy of Christ. May you joy in Him as He joys in you and so may your fellowship be sweet!

Lastly on this point, the feast at the one table indicated familiar affection. It is the child's place to sit at the table with its parents, for affection rules there. It is the place of honor to sit at the table. "Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table." But the honor is such as love and not fear suggests. Men at the table often reveal their minds more fully than elsewhere. If you want to understand a man, you do not go to see him at the Stock Exchange, or follow him into the market, for there he keeps himself to himself—you go to his table and there he reveals himself. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table with His disciples. 'Twas a meal, 'twas a meal of a homely kind—intimate communion ruled the hour. I am afraid, Brothers and Sisters, we have sometimes come to this table and gone away again without having had communion with Christ—and then it has been an empty formality and nothing more. I thank God that coming to this table every Sabbath, as some of us do, and have done for many years, we have yet for the most part enjoyed the nearest communion with Christ here that we have ever known, and have a thousand times blessed His name for this ordinance!

Still, there is such a thing as only eating the bread and drinking the wine and losing all the sacred meaning thereof. Do pray the Lord to reveal Himself to you. Ask that it may not be a dead form to you, but that now, in very deed, you may give your heart to Christ while He shall show to you His hands and His side, and make known to you His agonies and death wherewith He redeemed you from the wrath to come! All this, and vastly more, is the teaching of the table at which Jesus sat with the twelve. I have often wondered why the Church of Rome does not buy up all those pictures by one of its most renowned painters, Leonardo da Vinci, in which our Lord is represented as sitting at the table with His disciples, for these are a contradiction of the Popish doctrine on this subject! As long as that picture remains on a wall and as long as copies of it are spread everywhere, the Church of Rome stands convicted of going against the teaching of the earlier church by setting up an "altar" when she, herself, confesses that before it was not considered to be an altar of sacrifice, but a table of fellowship at which the Lord did not kneel, nor stand as an officiating priest, but at which He and His disciples sat. We, at least, have no rebukes to fear from antiquity, for we follow and mean to follow the primitive method! Our Lord has given us commandment to do this until He comes—not to alter it, but just to "do this," and nothing else, in the same manner, until He shall come again!

III. We will draw to a close by asking WHAT FURTHER MAY BE INFERRED FROM THIS SITTING OF CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES AT THE TABLE?

I answer, first, there may be inferred from it, the equality of all the saints. There were here 12 Apostles. Their Apostleship, however, is not concerned in the matter. When the Lord's Supper was

celebrated after all the Apostles had gone to Heaven, was there to be any alteration because the Apostles had gone? Not at all. Believers are to do this in remembrance of their Lord until He shall come. There was no command for a change when the first Apostles were all gone from the Church. No, it was still to be the same—bread and wine and the surrounding of the table until the Lord came. I gather, then, the equality of all saints. There is a difference in office, there was a difference in miraculous gift and there are great differences of growth in Grace, but still, in the household

Volume 54 7of God, all saints, whether Apostles, pastors, teachers, deacons, elders, or private members—being all equal—eat at one table. There is but one bread, there is but one juice of the vine here!

It is only in the Church of God that those words, so politically wild, can ever be any more than a dream—"Liberty, Equality and Fraternity." There you have them where Jesus is—not in a republic, but in the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ where all rule and dominion are vested in Him! And all of us willingly acknowledge Him as our glorious Head and all we are brethren! Never fall into the idea that older Believers were of a superior nature to ourselves. Do not talk of Saint Paul, Saint Matthew and Saint Mark unless you are prepared to speak of Saint William and Saint Jane sitting over yonder—for if they are in Christ, they are as truly saints as those first saints were! And I think there may be some who have even attained to a higher "saintship" than many whom tradition has canonized! The heights of saintship are, by Grace, open to us all and the Lord invites us to ascend! Do not think that what the Lord worked in the early saints cannot be worked in you. It is because you think so that you do not pray for it—and because you do not pray for it, you do not attain it! The Grace of God sustained the Apostles—that Grace is not less today than it was then! The Lord's arm is not shortened! His power is not straitened. If we can but believe and be as earnest as those first saints were, we shall yet subdue kingdoms and the day shall come when the gods of Hinduism and the lies of Mohammed and of Rome shall as certainly be overthrown as were the ancient philosophies and the classic idolatries of Greece and Rome by the teaching of the first ministers of Christ! There is the same table for you and the same food is there in emblem—and Divine Grace can make you like those holy men, for you are bought with the same blood and quickened by the same Spirit! Only believe, for "all things are possible to him that believes."

Another inference, only to be hinted at, is that the needs of the Church in all ages will be the same and the supplies for the Church's needs will never vary. There will still be the table—and the table with the same items upon it—bread, still bread—nothing more than bread for food. Still wine, nothing less than wine for drink. The Church will always need the same food, the same Christ, the same Gospel. Out, you traitors who tell us that we are to shape our Gospel to suit this enlightened 19th Century! Out, you false-hearts who would have us tone down the everlasting Truth of God that shall outlive the sun, moon and stars to suit your boasted culture which is but varnished ignorance! That Truth of God which of old was mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, is still mighty, and we will maintain it to the death! The Church needs the Doctrines of Grace today as much as when Paul, or Augustine, or Calvin preached them! The Church needs justification by faith, the substitutionary Atonement, regeneration and Divine Sovereignty to be preached from her pulpits as much as in days of yore! And by God's Grace she shall have them, too! Lastly, there is in this Truth, that Christ has brought all His disciples into the position of table

companions, a prophecy that this shall be the portion of all His people forever. In Heaven there cannot be less of privilege than on earth. It cannot be that in the celestial state, Believers will be degraded from what they have been below. What were they, then, below? Table companions. What shall they be in Heaven above? Table companions and blessed are they that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God! "Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God." And the Lord Jesus shall be at the head of the table! Now, what will His table of joy be? Set your imagination to work and think what will be His festival of soul when His reward shall be all before Him and His triumph all achieved! Have you imagined it? Can you conceive it? Whatever it is, you shall share in it—I repeat those words—whatever it is, the least Believer shall share in it! You, poor working woman, oh, what a change for you, to sit among the princes of Christ's palace of Glory, near to your Lord, all your toil and needs forever ended! And you, sad child of suffering, scarcely able to come up to the assembly of God's people—and going back, perhaps, to that bed of languishing—you shall have no pains there, but you shall be forever with the Lord! In the anticipation of the joy that shall be yours, forget your present troubles, rise superior to the difficulties of the hour and if you cannot rejoice in the present, yet rejoice in the future which shall so soon be your own!

We finish with this word of deep regret—regret that many here cannot understand what we have been talking about—and have no part in it. There are some of you who must not come to the table of Communion because you do not love Christ. You have not trusted Him. You have no part in Him. There is no salvation in what some people call "sacraments." Believe me, they are but delusions to those who do not come to Christ with their heart! You must not come to the outward sign if you have not the thing signified. Here is the way of salvation—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." To believe in Him is to trust Him. To use an old word, it is recumbency—it is leaning on Him, resting on Him. Here I lean on this platform rail. I rest my whole weight on this support before me. Do so with Christ in a spiritual sense—lean on Him. You have a load of sin, lean on Him—sin and all! You are all unworthy, weak and, perhaps, miserable. Then cast on Him the weakness, the unworthiness, the misery and all! Take Him to be All-in-All to you—and when you have thus trusted Him, you will have become His follower! Go on by humility to be His disciple, by obedience to be His servant, by love to be His friend and by communion to be His table companion!

May the Holy Spirit so lead you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Luke 22:7-54.

Verses 7-13. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and

Volume 54 9prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him, Where will You that we prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters in. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, the Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went and found as He had said unto them: and they made

ready the Passover. The hour of Christ's humiliation was drawing near, but He was still "The Master." He had but to send His servants and His request was at once obeyed—just as He might have asked for more than 12 legions of angels and they would have been immediately placed at His disposal.

14-22. And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of Him that betrays Me is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! What consternation those sentences must have caused in that little company! Christ and His 12 Apostles alone present, yet one of them was about to betray his Lord!

23, 24. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. How strange that such a quarrel should be going on just then! Their Master was going out to betrayal and crucifixion for them, yet they were disputing about which of them "should be accounted the greatest."

25-30 And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve. For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that serves? Is not he that sits at the table? But I am among you as He that serves. You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table, in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. What folly and sin to quarrel about earthly precedence when such heavenly honors were awaiting them!

31, 32. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren. Trial would be general to all the Apostles—"Satan has desired to have you"—but the danger would be special to Peter on account of his tendency to presumptuous zeal. "'I have prayed for you.' Your danger will be that after having transgressed, your faith will fail, so I have especially prayed about that. Where your greatest danger lies, there have I planted My batteries of prayer 'I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.'"

33. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. And I have no doubt that he thought he was ready to do all this! He spoke out of the fullness of his heart, but he did not know the weakness of his flesh. We are all too apt to promise great things and to fail in the fulfillment of them.

34-36. And He said, I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me. And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and

shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. At first our Savior had great popularity among the people and, under the cover of this, His disciples were received with respect and kindness so that, though they went forth without purse or scrip, they lacked nothing. But now Christ warns them that there is to be a very different state of things. Jesus is about to die and people will not be ready to entertain them. They will need to have a purse and scrip of their own. They will constantly be in peril of their lives and they will now need the sword and the scrip. This is all that the Savior meant.

37. For I say unto you, that this which is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end. "They are drawing to their close. I am about to be put to death as a transgressor and you will be treated as though you were the off-scouring of all things and were not fit to live because you are My followers."

38. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough. A smile must have passed over the Savior's face as He saw how they had misunderstood Him! He did not mean that they should literally carry swords, but that they should now have to go through an alien world and to meet with no friends or helpers. He evidently did not mean that they were to defend Him with the sword, for two such weapons would not have been "enough" against the Roman legionaries who were sent to seize Him! How apt they were to misconstrue and take literally that which He was accustomed to speak in figures, just as, to this day, some will have it that the bread on the Communion table is Christ's body and the juice of the vine is His actual blood!

39, 40. And He came out, and went, as He was known to do, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that you enter not into temptation. "There is a peculiar temptation coming upon you. I have taught you to pray every day, 'Lead us not into temptation,' but tonight make very special use of that petition—'Pray that you enter not into temptation.'"

Volume 54 11 41-44. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Was He heard? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, He was indeed heard! And especially in that part of His prayer, "nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done." And that was the most vital part of His prayer for, as much as He shrank from that bitter cup, still more did He shrink from any thought of going contrary to the will of His Father! That ought to be the heart of all our prayers— whatever we are asking for, chiefly and above all else this should be our cry—"nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

45, 46. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation. There must have been some very peculiar temptation about that night, that Christ's disciples should have needed to be again and again commanded to pray this prayer!

47-50. And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas,

betray you the Son of Man with a kiss? When they who were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. No doubt he meant to cut his head in two, but the sword slipped and merely took away his right ear.

51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer you thus far. And He touched his ear and healed him. There was no lasting mischief done, but, on the contrary, another instance given of the Divine Power of Christ. No other miracle of this kind is mentioned in Scripture—I mean the healing of a wound received by violence, the restoration of a member which had been cut off—and Luke is the only Evangelist who mentions it! It has been thought that because he was a physician and had a quick eye for acts of healing, that he mentions that Christ touched the ear of Malchus and healed him.

52-54. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the Temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Have you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the Temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Then they took Him and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 22,19 #2038 - The Lord's Supper--A Remembranc

THE LORD'S SUPPER—A REMEMBRANCE

OF JESUS

NO. 2038

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 19, 1888,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This do in remembrance of Me."

Luke 22:19.

"THIS do"—that is, take bread, give thanks, break it and eat it—take the cup, filled with the fruit of the vine, give thanks and drink you all of it. "This do." Take care that you do just what Jesus did—no more and no less. This act was done at a table where they had been eating the Passover. This act was performed at a common meal and was not a sacrifice, nor a celebration, nor a function, nor anything more than a significant eating of bread and drinking of wine after a devout fashion. This do—as often as you break the bread and as often as you drink of the cup—remember the Lord Jesus.

It is this that we are to do and not something else which may be supposed to grow out of it. He does not say, "Do something else in remembrance of Me—something which you may choose to do, retaining this act as the backbone of it. But this do." This which has just been done—this in all its simplicity, solemnity and intent.

Alas, how sadly have men forgotten this! The plain supper has not been a grand enough display. To break bread and to drink wine have not seemed to them to be sufficiently solemn, or sufficiently gorgeous and so they have added all kinds of rites and institutions. That which was only a table, they have made into an altar and that which was a supper and nothing more, they have changed into a celebration. They do not this but they do something else which they have devised and elaborated.

Imagine Paul or Peter attending mass and observing the various genuflections—the moving to and fro, the lifting up and the stooping down and all the various operations of the Roman priesthood—too many to describe! Paul would pluck Peter by the sleeve and say, "Our Master did nothing like this when He took bread and gave thanks and broke it." Peter would reply, "Very different this from the guest-chamber at Jerusalem!" And Paul would add, "Yes, indeed, my Brother, very different this from the time when the first Believers met together and broke bread and drank of the cup in common, in remembrance of their Lord."

Whatever other communities may do, be it ours, my Brethren, to stand fast by, "This do in remembrance of Me." "This," simply "this," and nothing more and nothing less. Bread, not a wafer. Fruit of the vine, not the concoction of chemistry inflamed with fiery spirit. We use this fruit of the vine in a cup and that cup not reserved but partaken of by all. We have before us bread and that not worshipped, as at the elevation of the host— but broken and eaten. The Lord and His disciples sat at a table and ate— it was a feast and not a sacrifice.

They reclined and did not kneel. So would we do, because He has said, "This do," and not something else. Then, beloved Friends, we shall have to be very watchful upon another point, namely, that if we do this, we do it for the purpose for which He gave it—namely, in remembrance of Him. Jesus never said, "This do, that you may offer an unbloody sacrifice." Where in Holy Scripture is there a syllable like it, either from our Lord's own lips or from those of the Apostles?

He never said, "Do this as the perpetual repetition of My death." To my mind the very thought is blasphemy, for our Lord claims to have finished His work and having died unto sin once, death has no more dominion over Him. The Jewish sacrifices, by reason of their insufficiency, were often repeated—but "this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." They blaspheme the sacrifice of Christ who imagine that any man, call him priest or not, can continue, repeat, or complete that sacrifice for sin.

It is finished and our Lord has gone into His Glory. Sin is put away by His bearing it in His own body on the tree. This do you in remembrance of Christ but not as continuing His sacrifice, which is forever perfect. I would not, for my part, on any account adopt the posture of kneeling in receiving the Lord's Supper. If it does not actually imply worship of the bread and wine, it has a tendency to lead us away from remembrance of the Person Himself into an adoration of the elements.

The sacred supper was a feast, not a ceremony. The posture used at the feast was that of lying along—the easiest posture into which they could put themselves. That is not congruous with our western custom. But the analogous position is that of sitting as much at ease as possible, which posture I would encourage you to persist in. Let us keep the feast as a feast but by no means kneel as though we were performing an act of worship before an altar.

Adoration of the invisible God is always right and proper. But if a certain posture seems to take away from the very essence of the festival—and a festival it is—and if in addition it encourages superstition—then kneel not but sit and do this in remembrance of Christ. Do this and nothing else and do it in remembrance and for no other purpose. And if any other posture looks another way, abjure it and keep close to that for which you have a precedent. The Church of Rome prizes the great picture by Leonardo di Vinci and in it all the Apostles are seated at the table. Is this at all like the mass? The supper is to be eaten in remembrance and for nothing more. But that, as we shall have to show you, is no little thing. "This do in remembrance of Me."

Seeing that this is a feast of remembrance, let us ask ourselves a question—Do we know the Lord? "This do in remembrance of Me." If you know nothing of a person. If you have had no acquaintance with him, you cannot remember him. Like a two-edged sword, this simple statement of truth sweeps through this audience tonight and divides it in two. Whether or not I may come to the Lord's Table must depend upon whether I know the Lord Jesus, or do not know Him. If I am a

stranger to Him, I may not come, for I may only come to remember Him and I cannot come to remember Him if I do not know Him. So it is a profanation of this blessed institution for any man to draw near to the table who does not know Christ already.

O Sirs, this is no saving ordinance—it was never meant to be. Its intent relates only to those who are saved. To know Jesus Christ is eternal life. And as you may not come without that knowledge, it is clear that you may not come unless you are saved. If any of you dream that your participation in your last moments in what is called "the sacrament" will save you, you are under a deep delusion. You may as well trust to the incantations of a witch as to the performance of any ceremony whatever, by whomsoever, in order to convey salvation to you. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

And that is not worked by the corporeal act of swallowing bread and wine. You must be born again. And that is not effected by material substances, however consecrated—it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Until you have believed in Jesus and so know Him and know His power within you and have come to personal dealings with Him—instead of getting a blessing from the ordinance—you would eat and drink condemnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body. You are not capable of discerning that body if you have no faith. Let every man examine himself as to his knowledge of our Lord and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup. If you do not know Him you cannot remember Him and therefore hands off from the tokens of remembrance.

One word—one solemn word here, which I would speak with my whole soul. Remember—if you do not know Him—the day will come in which He will say to you, "I never knew you." If there is no personal intimacy between you and Christ, He will disown you in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him. It will be idle to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in Your presence and You have taught in our streets." If you do not know Him, He does not know you and there will be simply this reply to all your claim derived from external religion—"Depart from Me, you cursed, I never knew you."

But, dearly Beloved, if you do know the Lord—and I trust that many here do, indeed, know Him—then it is certain that He has manifested Himself to you. Wondrous love! Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us? You have looked to Him. You have trusted in Him. You have lived upon Him. And all this because He has remembered you in your low estate. You remember Him with joy at this moment because of your past experience of Him. He is so dear to you that you must remember Him. You could not live without Him. He is all your salvation and all your desire. Well, then, it is for you to come to this festival and do this in remembrance of Him.

I. My first point shall be that THE MAIN OBJECT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IS EVIDENTLY THAT WE SHOULD REMEMBER CHRIST BY IT. Notice this particularly. It is not that you should call to mind a doctrine— though I would not have you ignorant or unmindful of any Truth of God which the Spirit of God has revealed. Neither is it that you should be mindful of a precept, though, Beloved, I would have you be careful that in all things you do your Savior's will. But the essence of your business at His table is, "This do in remembrance of Me," that is, of Himself—of His own blessed Person.

Think not of Him as an abstraction! Dream not of Him as a mere idea! Do not merely contemplate Him as an historical Personage who was once before men and has now passed from off the

canvas of history, as Confucius, Zoroaster, or the like. No. He ever lives and abides an actual, ever energetic force and power among men of every age. Jesus is of that Divine Nature which dwells perpetually in the present tense—the same yesterday, today and forever.

Beloved, as you live by Him, you must learn to live in Him and with Him, so as to know Him as a Friend with whom you are really familiar. The Christ of our dreams is but a dream. We need a real, living, personal Christ and it is Jesus Christ Himself that we have to remember tonight at this table.

And if we do this, we shall remember Him, first, with gratitude as our Savior. If I have anything of hope, I owe it all to You, incarnate God, Son of the Highest and Son of Mary, too. Your love, Your life, Your death, Your resurrection, Your power at the right hand of God—these must be the pillars of my hope, if hope I have at all—

"All our immortal hopes are laid In You, our Surety and our Head; Your Cross, Your cradle and Your Throne, Are big with glories yet unknown."

He has saved us, Brethren, and loved us and blessed us with everlasting consolation within Himself. Oh, let us think of Him! The streams of which you drink are sweet. But think of the fountainhead. Your healing is a thing to sing of forever. Remember that you are healed by His stripes and think of those cruel scourges, those five wounds, that body covered with a bloody sweat, that dear, thorn-encircled brow, those eyes all dimmed with blood. Remember Jesus Himself, I pray you, and think neither of pardon, nor of justification, nor of sanctification apart from Him.

The streams of love I trace up to the fountain in the heart of Christ and remember Him tonight with deepest gratitude. Follow me, my Beloved, in this meditation—yes, go before me and get nearer to the heart of your Redeemer. You must remember Him, next, with profound reverence as your living example—your living and reigning Lord. Know you not that as many of you as have been washed in His blood are henceforth God's servants, even as He was? You are not to do your own will but His will who has redeemed you. His example is to you the embodiment of the Lord's will. Do we not sweetly sing—

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord, I read my duty in Your Word; But in Your life the Law appears Drawn out in living characters"?

It is yours, then, to remember the Lord Jesus that you may follow Him. In sickness, remember Him in His patience. When you are persecuted, remember Him in His gentleness. In holy service, remember Him with His burning zeal. In your times of solitude, remember Him and His midnight prayers. And when you are in public and have to bear witness, remember Him and His lion-like declarations of the Gospel. Remember Him so that He becomes your pattern and you are the reproduction of Himself and so the best memorial of Him.

Thus enabled by the Holy Spirit to remember your Lord with gratitude as your Savior, with reverence as your Lord, you will remember Him with confidence as your strength. He has not left you in this world to serve Him at your own charges and to bear His Cross alone. Remember Him, for He remembers you so as to be ever with you. "Lo, I am with you always," says He, "even unto the end of the world." Will you let Him be near you unnoticed and unremembered? Never say, "I am lonely." You are not alone if you remember Jesus. O widow and fatherless one, say not, "I am

comfortless." He has said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

Remember Him without ceasing. When you are strong, remember Him. For your strength comes from Him. When you are weak, remember him. For He can give you the help you need. Oh, that in all times and places Christ were All in All to us!—

"Remember You! Your death, Your shame Our hearts' sad load to bear! O memory, leave no other name But His recorded there!"

I would have the image of my Lord printed on the palms of my hands, that I might do nothing without Him. And I would have it painted on my eyes, that I might see nothing except through Him. It were better still to have it stamped upon my heart, that my very life might not beat except to the music of His name.

Remember Him, too, Beloved, as your great representative before the Throne of God. O Believer, at this very moment Heaven is yours! Jesus, your Forerunner, has taken possession of eternal glory in your name. The Throne of God has in the midst of it the glorified Man, the everlasting Son of God, who is the Covenant Head and Redeemer of His people. Never forget Him but keep your eye fixed upon Him, even as He keeps His eye upon you. He lives! The great Redeemer lives! He lives to plead for you.

Do not get into the habit of the Romish Church, which exhibits its dead Christ everywhere, or its baby Christ in the virgin's arms. Jesus is neither of these at this time. "He is not here—He is risen." He lives! It is the living Christ that we believe in, the ascended Christ we are trusting in, the Christ to come that we are hoping for. There, where He pleads with all authority, is our grand hope, for "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

Remember Him, once again, as soon to come. Perhaps while yet these lips are feebly fashioning halting words concerning wondrous mysteries, the trumpet may ring out above all earthly sounds. Even on this Sabbath night we may be called to behold the cloud upon which the Son of Man has come! "Of that day and hour knows no man." And vain is the folly which is perpetually prophesying of that concerning which it knows nothing. Yet this is certain—the Lord Jesus will come to judge and to reign. "Behold, the Bridegroom comes."

He said long ago, "Behold, I come quickly." He has been coming in haste ever since and He must be drawing very near. Now this is what we are always to remember—for His coming will be the manifestation of His people as well as of Himself—His coming will witness the reward of His saints as well as His own reward. Then shall He shine forth. And with Him, "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Alas, we too much forget Him in all these aspects! I fear that we more easily forget than remember. And yet the remembrance of One so dear should be natural to us. Did you suspect, when you were first converted, that you could ever forget Him? "Oh, no," you said—

"Let the babe forget its mother, Let the bridegroom slight his bride; True to You, I'll love no other, Clinging closely to Your side."

So we said but not so have we done. How often we act as if we had not the living Christ to run to! We fret as if Jesus were still lying in the sepulcher. We act as if we were going to live here forever and did not expect our Lord to come and take us away to be with Him. We act as if we had no Master but our own wanton will. We act despairingly as if we had no Shepherd to take care of us and no Savior who had redeemed us with His precious blood. Come, Brethren, this will never do. It is dishonorable to our Lord and disgraceful to ourselves. You see the reason why the supper should have been instituted—our treacherous memories require it.

Let us gather to it as to a most needful, though right royal feast. For we have need to be reminded of our own dear Lord, who sweetly says to us, "This do in remembrance of Me."

II. And now I take a second point. I want to show you all that THE MODE WHICH OUR LORD HAS ORDAINED OF HELPING OUR MEMORIES IS IN ITSELF EXCEEDINGLY STRIKING. It could not be more so. If I stood opposite to an altar garnished with paper roses and other childish things, and if I were to try and perform before you all: some of these cute little functions which are considered sacred by the followers of Rome—I should need a long time to explain it all to you.

And when I had done my best, you would not be able to make heads or tails of it. I have stood and watched the Catholic priest at the altar with the earnest desire to see if there was anything to be learned and I could not learn anything. I could not make out what the ornamental person was at. I think I have read as much as most people about such things. But it does seem to me that if the behavior of the priest at the mass is a symbol, it is a very dark one—if it is intended to teach the people—they need to know a great deal before they can learn anything from it.

Surely to find anything in the mass, the devout must bring it with them, for there is nothing there. But if you look at yonder table, you will see before you simply bread and wine. And when you see us celebrate the ordinance tonight, you will notice that we do nothing but break the bread and eat it and pass round the cup and drink. All that is done is extremely simple. And the Savior seemed to wish for that simplicity, because He was Himself a very simple, unaffected, plain Man.

All the pomp that He ever had was when He rode through Jerusalem. But it was on a colt, the foal of an ass. Even then all the pomp consisted in this—the people laid their garments in the road and strewed branches along the way in the excess of their joy. Golden ornaments and flowers and incense and acolytes are far removed from His plain and natural habits. Only fancy some of His disciples rising from the dead and stepping into—well—St. Paul's cathedral, which is called Protestant but is about as Popish as it very well can be.

Supposing they walked in there—James and John together—the two sons of Zebedee. Perhaps stopping before some of the pretty things, James would wonderingly ask, "John, where have we got?" And John would say, "We are in a chamber of imagery, a temple of idols. Our Lord Jesus would not be happy here." "Why," says James, "it is Paul's Church. Fetch him in." Surely when Paul came in and looked at all those images and decorations, he would say, "Here I see another Gospel, which is not another. But there are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ."

That is putting it mildly. We are getting to have the idolatries of Rome set up in the Churches called national. And this is not done by those called outwardly and honestly, Romanists, but by those who are really so in their hearts, and yet wear the Protestant name. The Lord Jesus Christ was

just a simple peasant at Galilee and the garment He wore was analogous to our common smock frock, a garment "without seam, woven from the top throughout." There was not a bit of stateliness or affectation about Him. And in all that He ordained you cannot find one single pompous ceremony.

His followers were baptized in water—where did He ordain salt and oil and spittle? Where did He bid them make the "sign of the cross" or set forth "sponsors"? His followers gathered for worship and sang hymns in His praise but where were their "thuribles" and their "crucifers"? Where were "the stations of the cross"? Where are all these things in the Scriptures? They are inventions of later and darker days, but Jesus knew nothing of them—neither did His Apostles and those who followed them know nothing of such rubbish.

It was all plain telling of the dear love of God to men and of how men should love one another and love Jesus as their Savior—and that was it. Our Lord instituted this simple supper as the memorial of a plain, simple, honest Savior who had no gaudy tricks or priest craft about Him but was simply a Man among men.

But, next, our Lord's Supper was intended to be very frequent. "This do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." He has laid down no rule as to when we shall break bread. But the custom was certainly to break it on the first day of the week and I think oftener, for it seems to me that they broke bread from house to house. It was not a ceremony that required a minister or a priest. When Believers were together they broke bread in memory of Christ—any two or three of them—and so they remembered Him. It is most delightful, when traveling, to remember Christ in your own room, where two or three Brethren meet together. You have nothing to do but to break bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him. I know of nothing more sweet or more instructive than this Divine ordinance, which grows more impressive the oftener you attend to it. It ought to be frequent. Our Scotch friends were wrong—as wrong could be in having it so seldom—but they are mending. The frequency of it is to show how often we need to be reminded of our dear Lord—for we are prone to forget Him. We ought always to remember Him. And therefore an institution intended to keep up our memory should be frequently used.

Since He bids His disciples do it often, there is an instruction in it that we should constantly remember Him in our inmost souls. Inasmuch as He gave this for a memorial and for nothing else and gave it to all His disciples—bidding all His followers, until He should come—do this in remembrance of Him, it was to show that we all need to remember Him and all need help to do so. We are all forgetful—the best Christian, highest in Divine Grace still needs this memorial, for he is apt to forget. Backsliding Christians need it, if possible, still more, that their failing memories may be revived. Sinners will do well to look upon it, for it may be that the memorials of the Lord's death may cause them to remember their sins and turn to their Savior.

But to come a little closer to the table. I want you to notice that when our Lord bids us remember Himself—"This do in remembrance of Me"—he gives us an ordinance which brings before us His death. Now, this, though it looks a very trite saying, is a very important point. The bread is His flesh, the wine His blood. They represent those two things. But they are separated—the bread is not in the wine, nor the wine in the bread. The two in separate vessels represent a body with the blood separated from it and thus they are the token of death.

Very well, then. When the Lord says, "This do in remembrance of Me," He gives us a memorial of His death—which plainly teaches us that the chief point of remembrance in our Lord Jesus is His death. He Himself regarded His death as the very center, heart and soul of what He would fix on our memories. Therefore those who say that His example is everything, or His teaching is everything, do greatly err—for when we remember Him, the first thing to be remembered is, "He has redeemed us to God by His blood." "Redeemer" is the name to which our memories must most tenaciously cling. His blood, His redemption, His atonement, His substitutionary sacrifice are always to be kept to the front.

"We preach Christ crucified," and you believe in Christ crucified. The reason of our success under God in this House of Prayer is that we have always preached Christ as the atoning sacrifice—the sinner's Substitute. And whosoever shall preach this boldly, clearly and thoroughly, putting it as the crown of the Gospel system, shall find God will bless His preaching. As for you, if you would have comfort and joy and peace, cling to the Cross. Look steadily to the accepted sacrifice. Never get away from your Lord Jesus. And when you remember Him, let His passion be the main thought which rises before you. Next, notice another thing—this festival reminds us of the Covenant of Grace. Our Lord Jesus Christ, while He bade us remember Himself, said of the cup, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." That is the word. Read "testament," if you prefer it. But I feel sure you are nearer the sense when you read "the new covenant in My blood." What, then? When I am to remember Jesus Himself, I am to take the cup which is the token of the Covenant. Ah, Beloved, you cannot know Christ thoroughly unless you understand the doctrine of the two Covenants and connect Him with the Covenant of Grace.

You must know that "Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." For the cup is to remind you of it, by reminding you of Him. Christ is best seen when you see Him in His Covenant relationship. Do you all know about that Covenant? You know there was a Covenant made with Adam in which we were all included. But that Covenant failed. Father Adam broke it and we all lost the blessing which his obedience would have procured us. There is another Covenant made with the second Adam—Christ Jesus—and because He has kept the Covenant, all that are in that Covenant stand forever in Him.

"As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive" who are in Christ. The one Covenant ruined all that were in it—the second Covenant saves all that are in it. As we take that cup, we do own and accept joyfully our interest in that Covenant which was made with Christ, which is established on the sure foundation of His perfect obedience. Behold the blood of the EVERLASTING COVENANT! May the Lord Jesus be brought to your memory tonight as your Covenant Head and Surety. And as you drink of the cup, may you feel confidence and joy in Him who is your Surety!

May your soul sing, "Although my house be not so with God. Yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure. This is all my salvation and all my desire." You see, then, the oceans of instruction which lie in one of the emblems. Lose none of it.

But there is yet one more thing. It is this. You are taught by this institution that the very best way in which you can remember Christ is by receiving Him. Oh, the sweetness of that Truth, if you will remember it when you come to this table! You are not asked to bring bread with you. It is here. You are not asked to bring a cup with you. It is here already provided. What have you to do?

Nothing but to eat and to drink. You have to be receivers and nothing more.

Well, now, whenever you want to remember your Lord and Master, you need not say, "I must do something for Him." No, no! Let Him do something for you. "Take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord"—

"The best return for one like me, So wretched and so poor, Is from His gifts to draw a plea, And ask Him still for more."

Lord, I cannot love You as I would love You but I can accept Your love. Let Your love drop into my heart just now. Lord, I cannot serve You as I would but I adore You because You do become my Servant and wash my feet as You did your disciples. Lord, I cannot bring You coals of fire out of my chilly heart. But here is my heart, come and cast the coals of fire of Your own Divine love into it!

O my Brethren, come and receive! Come and RECEIVE! I think this is a very sweet intimation to those of you who feel as if you had nothing to come with. You do not need to come with anything except your hunger and thirst. A man that is invited to a meal need not say, "Oh but I have no bread." You are asked to a royal feast and you need not bring bread with you. He that invites you to His table will provide you with all you want. And when you desire to remember Him, your surest and best plan is to enjoy the good things which He sets before you. I have thus shown how suitable the ordinance is to help our memories.

III. Now, lastly, THE OBJECT FOR WHICH WE ARE TO COME, NAMELY, TO REMEMBER CHRIST, IS ONE WHICH IS IN ITSELF MOST INVITING. Let me show you what I mean. There is one here who cries, "I have forgotten my Savior. I did love Him. I hope my love has not quite gone but I seem to be very cold. Alas, I have forgotten my Lord."

Where should you go to have that love revived and refreshed? Should you not come where you will be helped to remember Him? He says, "This do in remembrance of Me." You say that you have forgotten your Lord. Come and remember Him again. Do not stay away but come with all the more eagerness. Remember Him as you did at first—when you came laden with guilt and full of fears—and when you just cast yourself upon your Lord and found peace. Come and rest in Him again.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, you that are afraid that your first profession was a mistake—come and begin again at the table. We have got into midsummer and the plants put out the midsummer shoot—you know—I want you to put out new shoots also. What? Do you say that it is long since you thought of growing? It is time to think of it again. If the spring shoot seems to have grown old, now is the time for a midsummer shoot—for a new beginning. Begin with Christ all over again. Repent and do your first work. "This do in remembrance of Me." Does not that exactly suit you who fear that you have for a while forgotten Him?

"Oh but I feel so weak." Yes but when a little child is very weak, there is still one thing which it can surely do—it can remember its mother. Memory is often quickened by our need—it is well when our sense of weakness makes us remember where our great strength lies. Remember, then, the Lord who is your strength and your song—for He also has become your salvation. Now, you poor little weak ones, where are you tonight? How gladly would I help you. But what better help can you

desire than that which your Lord sets before you in these dear memorials of His death!

I know that some of you have been cruelly pushed about of late. The strong ones have said sharp things to you. Your Lord invites you to a cheering exercise which shall help you to forget the poor behavior of the proud. Poor, timid, trembling, half-believing, half-doubting One, and yet truly the Lord's—come to the table, come to remember your loving Redeemer! It is painful to remember yourself but it will be sweet to remember Him. "Oh," you say, "I cannot forget Him." I am glad you cannot. Still, come here and indulge your memory tonight and say—

"Gethsemane, can I forget, Or there Your conflict see, Your agony and bloody sweat, And not remember You? When to the Cross I turn my eyes, And rest on Calvary, O Lamb of God, my Sacrifice, I must remember You."

There is one more thing I am going to say and I feel half ashamed to say it. Some professedly Christian people urge that they cannot come to the table because there are certain persons there who, in their judgment, should not be allowed to come. Is the Lord's Table to be a judgment seat, where we are to revise the verdict of the Church? "I cannot," said one to me, "join a Church, because I cannot find one that is perfect." No, I said and if you do not join a Church till you do find a perfect one, you must wait till you get to Heaven. And, besides, my dear Friend, if you ever find a perfect Church they will not take you in. For I am sure they would not be perfect any longer if they did. One sickly sheep would then have passed into the fold. So it is idle for you to be looking out for perfection.

"But there is a person at communion who acted inconsistently." That is highly probable. And he may be wearing your coat and looking out of your eyes. If you know of any case of open sin, let the elders of the Church be informed and it will be dealt with tenderly and firmly. In so large a Church as this there may be cases of evil living not known to the overseers of the flock. But we invite the co-operation of all in maintaining the purity of the entire body and we trust that we have it. But now, really, what have you to do with the faults of others when you are remembering Christ Jesus?

Surely this is the most unseasonable time for harsh judgments, or indeed for any judgments. I know many a Brother with whom I could not agree in certain points but I agree with him in remembering the Lord Jesus. I could not work with him in all things. But if he wants to remember Jesus, I am sure I will join him in that. It will do him good and it will do me good, to think of Jesus. That dear name is so sweet to me that I will remember Jesus with the poorest, meanest and most imperfect of mortals.

I am never happier than when I am in your midst, my beloved Brethren—and we all sit around the table, because I think of all the Lord has done for you and for me. Why, it is not worth while going to Heaven alone. A little lost child sits down on the doorstep of a West end mansion and cries because it is so lonely—is that to be our position in Heaven? Are we to take no friends there with us? Who wants to be solitary in the New Jerusalem? But oh, to come with all of you to the table and to look into the faces of all God's people and to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is in each one of them!

They are a poor lot, full of mistakes, full of errors, full of infirmities, just like their minister. But the Lord has loved them and bought them with His blood. A precious Christ He is—not only to have saved me but tens of thousands of His saints everywhere. For there are people of His in all

Churches, even in the Churches that are most full of error. He has redeemed, by His precious blood, His own elect in the midst of them all. Why, the sight of you helps me to recollect Jesus and to get a better idea of Him—both your Christ and my Christ! And not our Christ alone but the Christ of all the myriads redeemed by His blood.

Shall I then set myself up for a judge and say, "No, I will not remember my Lord because one of the Brethren does not behave properly"? What would you say to your child if he said, "Father, I shall not come to see you on your birthday. I shall not join with the rest of the family in the usual festival"? Why not? "Because my brother is not what he ought to be. And till he mends his ways, I shall not keep your birthday." Your father would say, "My dear son, is that any reason why you should not remember me? Surely I am not to blame for what your brother does. Come to the feast and think of me."

So do I say to you if you have any personal angers and differences—do not smother them but end them. Do not come to the table till you have got rid of them, for you have no right to come. But end all wrath at once. Get rid of every ugly feeling you have towards everybody in the world and love all Believers in Christ for Christ's sake. Then come to this table and you will find it will help you to remember your Master as you shall join with others who remember Him. I think I may say that you will not be likely to see anybody at the table worse than yourself. So come along and let not pride keep you back. May God's infinite mercy bless the Lord's Supper to the Lord's people!

And as for those that cannot come and remember Him because they do not know Him, may they, this night, go home and seek Him. And if they seek Him, He will reveal Himself to them. If you desire Christ, Christ desires you. If you have a spark of love to Him, He has a furnace full of love to you. And if you want to come to Him and trust Him to save you, come and welcome. The Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

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[THIS sermon is issued, not because Mr. Spurgeon has been unable to preach on the Sabbath but because he has gone into the country for the week and so was unable to prepare for the press the sermon of last Lord's Day. That sermon will appear, if the Lord wills, with that of the following Sabbath next week. There has been a request for a sermon upon the Lord's Supper and here it is.]

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Luke 22,27 #2514 - Servus Servorum

SERVUS SERVORUM

NO. 2514

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 25, 1897.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1885.

"I am among you as He that serves."

Luke 22:27.

OBSERVE, dear Friends, that our Lord, in order to impress a great

practical Truth of God upon His 12 Apostles, refers them to Himself. He very often does so, quoting His own doings as an example to His servants. Does not this fact give us a hint that there is someone greater than a man here, for no mere man, modest and true and right-minded, would continually make himself the object of imitation! We would not consider it right if we found Abraham, or Moses, or David constantly pointing to himself as an example. Such a course is very proper for certain persons in certain special cases as, for instance, Paul might occasionally allude to himself when he was addressing his own converts, but even then rarely doing it—and doing it with extreme diffidence. But our Lord acts thus very often and with the utmost possible naturalness! Neither did it ever suggest itself to anyone of His people that there was anything immodest in His doing so. Such an idea never occurred to us because we have always recognized in Him something which entitled Him to speak thus, something which rendered it quite right that He should so speak. He is Master and Lord! He is very God of very God! He is perfect! He is out of the lists of ordinary men, He rises like a lone Alp above us all and when He speaks as He does in the words before us, the very fact that He does speak without our feeling any objection thereto proves that there is a something altogether unique about His Character, and that something, I believe, is the existence of perfection, and the evidence of Deity combined with His Humanity.

At any rate, dear Brothers and Sisters, this is a matter of fact in our holy faith, that the best lesson for a Christian to learn is to be learned from Christ, Himself. I am afraid that in these days some are preaching in a lop-sided way. Years ago Christ was set forth almost exclusively as an example. "Concerning the Imitation of Christ" was the great matter of public discourse—and many books were written upon that important theme. But, inasmuch as in those days they forgot and undervalued the Sacrifice of Christ and did not preach Justification by faith in His precious blood, their preaching was but dim and inefficient and Christ was not largely imitated, after all, although men were bid to imitate Him. Now, we preach His sacrifice—in many of our places of worship the Atonement of Christ is very clearly proclaimed and the plan of salvation by virtue of His precious

blood is very widely declared with more or less

Volume 43 1of clearness, for which I thank God. But we must take care that we do not forget that Christ is our Example as well as our Atonement—and that, while by His death we live, the life which we live is to be conformed to the life of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. He did not merely come to save us from the guilt of sin, but He came to save us from the power of sin. He does not merely bring us pardon, but He brings us holiness and He comes to make us like Himself. This, indeed, is the end of His life and of His death—that we might grow into His image and become truly replicas—repetitions of Christ according to our degree, among the sons of men.

I want, therefore, to say to you who are Christ's people—As He has saved you, follow Him! If you are washed in His blood, be like He! If, indeed, He is your Master and Lord, obey Him! In all that you do, ask yourselves this question, "What would Christ have done under these circumstances?" And then act according to the answer which God's Word and your own conscience give you. "As He is, so are we, also, in this world." And if we fulfill our destiny to the glory of God and the honor of our Redeemer, we shall make men see in our own proper persons what Christ was when He was here—"holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." Christ always points us to Himself. If He bids us trust Him, He also bids us follow Him. If He bids us hope in Him, He also bids us obey Him and be like He is. And they who will not have His holiness shall not have His Atonement! If we do not care to be like He is, we cannot be saved by Him.

The particular evil at which our Lord aimed when He uttered the words of our text was the evil which is so common in the Church, even down to the present day, that is, each man seeking to be somebody. We are all born great the first time—it is only when we are born the second time, born from above—that we come to be little. When we were born the first time, we were so great that we were really nothing—but when we are born a second time, we are so little that we are everything in Christ! At first, self seeks to gain the mastery. It has a head that must wear the crown and feet that must be shod with silver slippers. Self will wear no sackcloth, it must be clad in silk at the very least. Self always exalts itself above all its fellows—it even pines after the Throne of God, for self has the ambition of Lucifer and will never be satisfied, however high it mounts. Now, our Savior wants, in His disciples, that self should be crushed, that all desire to be great should be quenched and that, instead of all of us wanting to be masters, we should see which of us can be servants! If we are as Christ was, we shall catch the spirit which made Him say, "I am among you as He that serves."

I. To that point I bend all my strength just now and, first, I want to speak a little upon our Lord's position among His own followers—"I am among you as He that serves."

The 12 Apostles came together to the Last Supper. There was usually a servant or slave in the room to wash the feet of the guests, but there does not appear to have been such a person on that occasion. Peter did not offer. Even John did not think of it. Thomas was probably considering who ought to do it and Philip, the arithmetician of the Apostles, was calculating how much water it might take—but nobody offered to do it. Everybody's business, you know, is nobody's business, so nobody offered to wash anybody's feet. They had already taken their positions, reclining about the table when, without any suggestion from anybody else, the Master Himself rose from their midst, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself with it, poured water into a basin and

went from one to another—and washed their feet. After He had done that, and was again reclining with them, He said to them, in effect, "I am among you as the slave, the domestic who does the most menial work. You see that I am." They could not contradict it, for He had actually and literally taken that position among them.

But, dear Friends, this act of our Lord's was no novelty! What He did literally that evening, He had been doing ever since they had formed a community! He was always the servant of them all. He was constantly looking out for their interests and laying Himself out to do them good. They did not come to Him to bring Him anything—they came to receive from Him. They did not come to teach Him, or even to comfort Him with their company. They all came for what they could get from Him and to learn the Truth of God from His lips, some of them hoping to be led by Him to a kingdom which they did but dimly understand, but they were all, as it were, sitting at a table all the time they were with Him, being fed with heavenly and spiritual food. And He was all the while their servant, washing their feet, bearing with their ill manners, sweetly correcting their mistakes and always patient, notwithstanding their slowness of learning. He could truly say, not only of that supper night, but of His whole life, "I am among you as He that serves."

When Christ thus spoke, He called Himself not merely a servant, one that serves, but specially the servant—the deacon, the attendant, is really the word. "I am among you as the waiter. You are the gentlemen who sit at the table and I am the servant who waits upon you." Our Lord meant to remind the Apostles by this act that He had always taken among them the very lowest place. He had never exercised any sort of domineering authority over them, He had never been exacting in His demands upon them. He had never sought His own comfort at their expense, but He was always meek and lowly in heart—always seeking their welfare rather than His own. There was not one of them but knew that this was true. He was less than the least among them, although He was greatest of them all! As the old writers used to say, He was servus servorum, the Servant of servants.

A servant, you know, is one who has to care for other people. When she gets up in the morning, it is not her work to look to her own comfort. The true servant in the house glides along quietly, watching to see what can be done for the comfort of all the inhabitants. Such a person forgets herself, or himself, in thinking of others. This is just what our Lord Jesus did—He never seems to have given Himself a thought, He was only thinking of the poor multitudes that gathered about Him and of the sick folk that He could heal and of the humble few that came into His more intimate acquaintance, and called Him Lord and Master. Wonderfully unselfish was He whose whole care was for others and who could truly say to His disciples, "I am among you as He that serves."

A true servant ignores his own will. He does not do what he would like to do—he does what his master tells him to do. He is engaged as a servant and he lives as a servant. And he obeys the will of him who has employed him. Was it not just so with our Lord in the whole course of His life? "I came not," He said, "to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." From His childhood, He must be about His Father's business and, until His last hour, when He could say to His Father, "It is finished," He never had two businesses in hand. His one sole concern was to take upon Himself the form of a servant, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Beloved, I cannot imagine a better picture of a servant than the full length portrait of Him who is truly Lord of All! "King of kings" is a title full of majesty, but "Servant of servants" is the name which our Lord

preferred when He was here below!

A servant is one who bears patiently all manner of hardness. Many servants have had to endure a great deal of hardship and, sometimes, much misjudgment and harshness. But this blessed Servant of the Father bore cold, nakedness, hunger and even death in His servitude. And though He was despised and rejected by the very men whose good He sought. Though He was maltreated, maligned and slandered, yet He still never turned aside. even for self-defense. He held on in His holy and sacred course as Servant of all. I do not know how to put this Truth of God as I would like to, but I want you to recognize that He, who this day sits on the highest Throne in Glory amid a hierarchy of angels, adored of blood-redeemed spirits, was among us here below as the Servant of His own servants! Your Blessed Lord, whose face outshines the sun at noonday, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who is this day Head over all things to His Church—your Lord, who shall shortly come with myriads of saints and angels to judge the world in righteousness, was, when He was here, nothing more than this—"He that serves." That was His position.

II. I have entrenched upon what I meant to make the second subject of discourse, namely, THE WONDER OF THIS POSITION, for it is among the greatest of all wonders that Jesus, the Lord of All, should have become the Servant of All!

Very briefly let me suggest to your minds that the marvel was all the greater as He was Lord of All by nature and essence. Our Lord Jesus was Divine. He was "God over all, blessed forever," "Son of the Highest," that Eternal Word, without whom was not anything made that was made. Yet to His disciples He says, "I am among you as He that serves." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth." Truly, it was a marvelous condescension on our Lord's part!

Remember, too, that He was infinitely wise. There was never another teacher like Christ, for He could answer every question and solve every difficulty. Those piercing eyes of His looked through every secret place and revealed the darkest mysteries of human life. Then, surely, they set Him on high in the church of His day, they made Him professor, they paid Him every homage! But, did they? No. He said, "Though I am Rabboni, the Great Master, yet I am among you as He that serves." Is this how you treat your wise men, O you gracious ones? Do you set them to wash the disciples' feet?

Recollect, also, that He was immaculately pure and incomparably good. There was never such another Man among all the sons of men! There can never be another Character so charming as His. All perfections meet in Him to make up one perfection! All the sweets of the highest morality and spirituality are blended in Him to make one perfect and essential sweet! Yet He is among us as the One that serves. There was a certain preacher who cried out in his sermon, "O virtue, if you were once embodied, and should come down among mankind, all men would worship you!" But see, here is Virtue perfected and Incarnate—and down among us serving as a Servant! This is how man treats the Perfect One—and it is a great wonder.

Besides that, the Lord was our superlative Benefactor. He was here simply to bless us. Eyes, lips, hands, feet—all scattered benedictions. He was a sun in the midst of human darkness. His every thought was a beam of light and comfort for mankind. Yet He could say, "I am among you as He

that serves." In order to be our Benefactor, He takes the very lowest place and men were content to keep Him there and let Him wash their feet. Oh, 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing, yet true!

It is amazing, too, that He should be a servant among such poor creatures as they were. I have heard of some who have been willing to wash the feet of saintly men, but these disciples were a band of poor sinners. I have heard of some who would have been willing to perform menial offices for great philosophers, or men of high dignity. But these disciples were mainly a company of Galilean fishermen who had lately left their boats and nets, or peasants fresh from the soil of their fields full of all the faults and infirmities natural to men of their class. Yet our blessed Lord said to them, "I am among you—you fishermen, you countrymen, you poverty-stricken men—I am among you as He that serves." O gracious Master, You were humble, indeed, and it did well become You! You seem, despite Your ineffable Glory, to be quite at home when You are acting as slave to Peter and James and John, taking their soiled feet into Your pure hands and washing them clean.

III. Now, in the third place, let us inquire what is the explanation of this wonder? Why did our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was among the twelve, take the place of Him that serves? Why did He, who was Lord of All, become Servant of All?

First, because He was so truly great. The little man is always jealous lest he should be treated as little. The little selfish being tries to wriggle himself into notice somehow or other. He needs to be observed and then he wants to do something for which he may have a vote of thanks—and he would like it to be proposed in very special terms. Do you expect him to wash any men's feet? Well, he might wash the feet of gentlemen, in a golden basin, with a crystal basin, rose water, and a damask napkin. Oh, yes, my lord would do it that way very prettily and think a great deal of his condescension! But actually to take the feet of poor men into his hands and to wash them—to really do some such service to those who need it—he could not manage that! He is so little that he could not rise to such a dignified position. Brothers and Sisters, it was because our Lord was so superlatively great that He could do little things, that He could stoop and be lowly. It is in the nature of such a great heart as His to be willing to do any necessary thing for those whom it loves.

But the second answer to the question is this. Our Lord was among men as One that serves because He had such immeasurable love. Love is always happiest when it can do something for its object. It is no toil for love to labor for that which it loves—it would be slavery to it to be withheld from so delicious an exercise! Look at the mother with her child— even with all the many trials she has with it—it is so dear that she counts it a relaxation rather than a bondage to take care of her own beloved offspring! And have you never known a loving woman sit by the bedside of her sick husband? The nights have been long and dreary but she has not left him whose life was ebbing away. The candle has burnt low and the daylight has peeped in through the blinds, but there she is— still sitting—and unless she verily faints away through sheer exhaustion, you cannot get her from that sick room, for love holds her there and keeps those weary eyelids from dropping down and makes her feel it to be a sad joy, a grief but a pleasure to be near him whom she loves.

And our blessed Lord was so full of love to us that nothing seemed a stoop to Him. "For the joy that was set before Him," the joy of blessing His people, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." "Will I wash their feet?" He seemed to say, "that is very little. I will wash them altogether in my heart's blood. I will bear their sins in My own body on the tree and will be, indeed, among them

as He that serves to the fullness of a sacred service such as never was exhibited before or since." It was love, it was wondrous love, excessive love, that would not let Him stay in Heaven amid the splendors of His royalty, but made Him come to earth, amid the sorry surroundings of penury and grief, that He might save us!

IV. Now, lastly, I am coming to what I have been driving at all the while and that is, THE IMITATION OF OUR LORD'S HUMILITY. I suggest to you at once the power by which you shall learn to imitate your Lord. If you get His love in your hearts, you will always long and wish to take up a position like His and be among your fellow Christians as one that serves.

If we are to imitate Christ, it will involve, dear Friends, that we who are saved by Him should joyfully undertake the very lowest service. If there is a door to be kept, if there is a path to be swept, let us aspire to that dignity. If there is a class of men more degraded than another, let us wish to go to them. If there is a rank of women more fallen than another, let us pray and labor especially for them. If there are any members of the Church that are more neglected and despised than others, let us be most attentive to them. If there is somebody who really is quite a worry when we visit her, let us visit her. If there is a person who really is so exceedingly poor and, perhaps, so very dirty that it takes a good deal of selfdenial to go and sit by her bedside when she is sick, let us go. If we are to be like Christ, we shall all be eager for the lowest work, we shall all be seeking who can take the lowest place. If you want this pulpit, dear Friends, you can have it if you can fill the position better than I do. But then, perhaps, you might not! But there will not be much competition for the lowest place. If you become a candidate for that position, you will get it. There are not likely to be too many applicants for the post and, by degrees, one and another will edge out, so I recommend you, if you really want the place that Christ would have you take, that is, the very lowest position in the Church of God, to go in for it, for you will get it.

You have all heard of David Brainerd, the great missionary to the Red Indians. He was seen, one day, lying in his hut, teaching a little Red Indian child to say, "a, b, c." Somebody said, "What? Is this David Brainerd teaching that little dunce his letters?" "Yes," he said, "I have prayed God that, as long as I live, I might be useful. And now I am too weak to preach, I am too feeble to do anything else but just teach this little child the alphabet. And I shall keep on doing something for my Master till I die." So, dear Friend, if you cannot teach the thousands, teach two or three! If you could not even venture on two or three, yet teach your own child, or look after somebody else's child, some gutter child, some Arab of the street! Be as your Master would have you be, "as he that serves," by seeking to fill the very lowest office in His Church.

Show the same spirit, also, in being at all times lowly in your esteem of yourself. You know the gentleman who is always being insulted, I know him very well, indeed—you could not wink an eye at him but you would insult him! He has a very thin skin—you must mind how you think when you are near him—he is always being treated in a disrespectful manner. Nobody ever seems to treat him as he ought to be treated in the place where he now is. If he were to get among people of greater sense and better education, he says that there he should be respected. I almost wish he would go—still, I must not say so, because, perhaps, we can mend him if we let him stay and all of us seek to do him good. But, Brothers and Sisters, do not any of you be of that character, but be among those sensible persons of whom a disrespectful thing could not be said because they would not treat it as disrespectful!

Some time ago a man said a very unkind and untrue thing of me, and I felt quite pleased because I thought that if he had known me better, he might have said something worse. But I was quite satisfied to take the bad thing as it was. I never told anybody about it and I do not intend to, for it really did not trouble me at all. As far as I remember, I slept as long that night as I had done before. There is no use in believing that you are such an important person that the wind must not blow on you, because the wind will blow on you! Do you not find it so? Well, suppose that we do not have any dignity. Suppose that we, each one, say, "I am among you as he that serves. Now, then, find as much fault as you please." In wet weather, one of the most useful things in a house is the doormat— and a doormat never complains of persons wiping their boots on it— because it was put there for that very purpose. And if you are quite willing to let people wipe their dirty boots on you, you will come to feel, "What a capital man I am! How beautifully that man cleaned his boots on me just now! He found great fault with me, but he was not finding fault with somebody else just then. It did not hurt me and it might have hurt somebody else, so I am doing good service in bearing what, after all, does not so much offend me now I have brought my mind to it." So, have a lowly estimate of yourself, for then you will be like Christ, who said, "I am among you as He that serves."

Furthermore, Brothers and Sisters, may I earnestly inculcate upon Christians that we should always be seeking to do good to others, for that is what Christ meant. He made His disciples recline at the table, but He waited on them. It was His high office to be the lowest among them! Now, Christian people, look out for opportunities of doing good to others. "I do not know," says one, "that I get much good out of the Church." But that is not the point! The question for you to ask is, "How much good have I done to the Church?" for, after all, our being here is not with a view of getting so much out of it, but putting so much into it. The Christian man's way of living is by giving, for he realizes that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

If you really want to serve somebody, there is a wide field open to you. You need not go to Africa to do it. You can stay in your own house and serve somebody there. It seems to me that a Christian should be trying from morning to night what he can do to bless other people for their good. It should be the mother's ambition to make the children happy and to train them for Christ. It should be the father's wish that all under his care in the house should enjoy being at home and should think that there never was such a home as he makes. It should be the girl's wish that brothers and sisters at home should be glad to think that Mary is there, for she is quite a light in the house. And the brother should make it his joy to do everything that can minister to the comfort of his mother and sisters. In fact, this is the point wherein Christians would carry Christianity on to a greater triumph—if they, each one, sought the good of others.

But some are so grumpy, so snappy, that they cannot do even a good thing without doing it badly! If they do you a favor, you feel that it is just the same as if they had offended you. Let it not be so with us, dear Friends! Let us seek to exhibit an amiable, gracious, loving spirit—not by pretending to have it—but by really loving others and desiring their present, their future and their eternal welfare. This is what Jesus did when He said, "I am among you as He that serves." Let us do the same as far as in us lies. In a word, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in being willing to bear and forbear even to the end. The true Christian is the man or woman who, when he is reviled, reviles not again—when he is falsely accused, scarcely thinks it worth his while to answer—who often foregoes his rights—and is willing to do so. He or she is one who is not for

self, not even for justice to himself, but is willing to bear and suffer wrong rather than inflict wrong.

Someone, perhaps, says that I am teaching you hard lessons. Yes, but if you are the children of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the kind of lesson that you will love and try to practice! And as you become proficient in it, there will be a peculiar sweetness stealing into your spirit. I pray God that we may have the mind of Christ, that we "may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." If any treat you ill, love them all the more! If they make you angry, try to get over it as quickly as possible. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Pay them off the next day by doing them some kindness which you would not have done if they had not treated you badly. Always try to speak as well of everybody as you can. When you hear anything against them, cut it in halves—and cut each half into two more halves—and then throw all away as if you had never heard it! Go through the world with the full conviction that there are some good people in it and that if there are not, it is time that you should be one and should help to increase the number by exhibiting a holy, humble, gentle, gracious spirit. If you have this mind in you, your Lord will be glorified and men will say, "Is this a Christian? Then let me be a Christian, too!"

God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Luke 22:1-39.

Verses 1, 2. Now the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is

called the Passover. And the chief priests and scroll sought how they might kill Him; for they feared the people. Dastardly fear often drives men to the greatest crimes. He who is not brave enough to be master of his own spirit and to follow the dictates of his own conscience may do, before long, he little knows what. Because of the fear of the people, the chief priests and scribes were driven to compass the death of Christ by craft and to bring Him to His death by the cruel betrayal of Judas, one of His own Apostles.

3-6. Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude. Was it not a sad thing that the betrayer of Christ should be one of the twelve? Yet deeply trying as it must have been to the heart of Christ, there is something useful about even that horrible transaction! It says to all the professing Church of Christ, and it says to us who claim to be Christ's followers, "Do not think yourselves safe because you are in the visible Church. Do not imagine that even holding the highest office in the Church can prevent you from committing the basest crime. No, for here is one of the twelve Apostles, yet he betrays his Master!

Sometimes we have found this betrayal to be a source of comfort. I have myself desired, in receiving members into the Church, to be very careful, if possible, only to receive good men and true. Yet, though pastors and elders of the Church may exercise the strictest watch, some of the worst of men will manage to get in. When that is the case, we say to ourselves, "No new thing has happened to us, for such a sinner as this marred the Church from the very beginning." Here is

Judas, when Christ, Himself, is the Pastor, when the twelve Apostles make up the main body of the Church. Here is Judas, one of the twelve, ready to betray his Master for the paltry bribe of 30 pieces of silver—the price of a slave. Yes, we might have been put out of heart in building up the Church of God if it had not been for this sad but true narrative concerning Judas and his betrayal of our Lord.

7, 8. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. Notice how carefully our Lord respected the ordinances of that dispensation so long as it lasted. The Passover was an essential rite of the Jewish faith and our Lord, therefore, duly observed it. Learn here, dear Brothers and Sisters, to esteem very highly the ordinances of God's House! Let Baptism and the Lord's Supper keep their proper places. You do them serious injury if you lift them out of their right places and try to make saving ordinances of them. But, in avoiding that evil, do not fall into the opposite error of neglecting them! What Christ has ordained, it is for His people to maintain with care until He comes again. And if He kept the Passover even when, in Himself, it was already on the point of being fulfilled, let us keep up the ordinances which He has enjoined upon us. If any of you have neglected either of them, let me remind you of His gracious words, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," and, "This do you, in remembrance of Me."

9-13. And they said unto Him, Where do You want us to prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters in. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready. And they went, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. Observe in this passage an amazing blending of the human and the Divine! No mention is made of either as a matter of doctrine, but incidentally our Lord's Divinity and Humanity are most fully taught. Here is Christ so poor that He has not a room in which to celebrate the most necessary feast of His religion. He has made Himself of no reputation and He has no chamber which He can call His own. Yet see the Godhead in Him! He sends His messengers to a certain house and tells them to say to the good man of the house, "Where is the guest chamber?" It all turns out just as He said it would be and He is welcomed to this man's best room and to the furniture thereof. Jesus speaks here as did His Father when He said to Israel in the olden time, "Every beast of the forest is Mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills." All the guest chambers in Jerusalem were really at Christ's disposal—He had but to ask for them and there they were—all ready for Him! Here we see the majesty of His Deity but, inasmuch as He had no room that He could call His own, we also see the humility of His Manhood.

14-16. And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. This was to be His last meal with His disciples before He died. And He had looked forward to it with great desire. It was a most solemn occasion and yet to Him a most desirable one. May something of the Master's desire overflow into your hearts, Beloved, whenever you are about to partake of the sacred feast which He instituted that night!

17-20. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you. Do you see how this new memorial was blended with the Passover, how it melted into that social meal which formed part of the paschal celebration? There was a cup, then bread, and then the cup after supper, so there was a gracious melting of the one dispensation into the other. We see our Lord's wisdom in thus leading His children on from step to step, without a break, conducting them from one line of service to another and a still higher one.

21. But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table. This was a sad and solemn fact, yet it has often been so since that night. The nearer to Christ, the farther from Him—so has it sometimes happened since. He who was, in some respects, the highest in the College of the Apostles became the lowest in the ranks of the children of perdition.

2, 23. And truly the Son of Man goes, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. Let us also pass that question round among ourselves—

"When any turn from Zion's way, (Alas, what numbers do)! Methinks I hear my Savior say, 'Will you forsake Me, too?' Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine, Unless You hold me fast, I feel I must, I shall decline, And prove like them at last. The help of men and angels joined Could never reach my case Nor can I hope relief to find But in Your boundless Grace. What anguish has that question stirred, If I will also go? Yet, Lord, relying on Your Word, I humbly answer, No."

God grant us more Grace, that we may be held fast by the records of love!

24. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. Let me read you these two verses together. They strike me as being very remarkable. Here are two questions—"They began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing," that is, betray their Lord. "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." What poor creatures we are! How we are tossed with contrary winds! The new question comes up and yet the old question, which ought to have been smothered by it, still remains there! It is possible that Luke is here alluding to some dispute which the Apostles had previously had and now the Lord, remembering that even in the ashes of contention lived the fires of ambition, would quench the last sparks of the evil fire.

25. And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. The people are compelled to use sweet terms to express a very bitter bondage, so they call their tyrants, "benefactors."

26, 27. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve. For which is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves? The guest, or the waiter at the table?

27-31. Is not he that sits at meat? But I am among you as He that serves. You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has

appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. As our Lord Jesus looked upon His eleven Apostles, He felt that their time of greatest trial was fast approaching. Beyond anything they had ever endured before, they were now to be put into the devil's sieve and Satan would toss them to and fro, and seek, if possible, to destroy them!

32. But I have prayed for you, that your faith fails not.—"I have made you, Simon, a special object of My prayer. All the brotherhood will be tried, but for you I have especially prayed, for you, who seem to be the strongest, are the weakest of them all, so I have prayed specially for you, that your faith fails not."

32. And when you are converted—"When you are restored"— 32-39. Strengthen your brethren. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am

ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me. And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip, and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough. And He came out, and went, as He was accustomed, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY

TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 22,31-32 3178 - The Preparatory Prayers of Ch

THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST

NO. 3178

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 7, 1873.

"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus,
also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the
Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him,
and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My
Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

Luke 3:21-22.

"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain
to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was
day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose
twelve, whom also He named Apostles."

Luke 6:12-13.

"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took
Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.
And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered,
and His raiment was white and glistening."

Luke 9:28-29.

"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain
apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But
the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the

wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus

went unto them, walking on the sea."

Matthew 14:23-25.

"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid.

And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people

here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me."

John 11:41-42.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you,

that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith

fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren."

Luke 22:31-32.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your

hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost."

Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which

everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preacher, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to preach, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the preparatory prayers of Christ—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for

suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21-22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased." There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore audible testimony to Christ. And on

each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ's prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, "Behold, he prays," before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles."

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, "in a bodily shape like a dove," to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will reMal. in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! "Draw near

Volume 56 3to God, and He will draw near to you," not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior's preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication on our part in similar circumstances. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit's blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12-13—"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PRO

TRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His

disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles."

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might

have said to Himself, "I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them." He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father's ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father's authority and the Spirit's power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God's blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior's example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

"With You all night I mean to stay, And wrestle till the break of day."

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan's long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis

Volume 56 5ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, "Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!"

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28-29—"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening." You see that it was as He prayed that He was transfigured.

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor's top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD'S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41-42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until first He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31-32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

Volume 56 7PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter before he was tempted. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may not fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

"But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purseproud." Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

"Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him." Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311,

Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS

OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at

http://.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

Volume 56 9While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the

all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that a saved man does is to pray—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

"Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice, Returning from his ways While angels in their songs rejoice, And cry, 'Behold, he prays!' Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, The Christian's native air! His watchword at the gates of death He enters Heaven with prayer!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Luke 18:1-14.

Verse 1. And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought

always to pray, and not to faint. [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] An old writer says that many of Christ's parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—"that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." And this is the parable.

2. Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. And he would not for a while. He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God, nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, "that I may not be worried to death by this woman's continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary."

6, 7. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them? [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose

His people from eternity! "Shall not God avenge His own elect?" Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and "cry day and night unto Him."

8. I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? [See Sermon #1963, Volume

33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. Two men went up into the Temple to pray. [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—

THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for

prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in these days—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found, And every place is hallowed ground."

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—"or even as this publican." What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God's sight!

Volume 56 11 12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. And the publican, standing afar off—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [See Sermon #1949, Volume

33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was all prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, "a sinner." He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican's prayer, it is, "God be propitious to me," that is, "be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice." And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee's boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. I tell you, this man—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, "this man"—

14. Went down to his house justified rather than the other. He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download

the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

14. For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 22,32 #2035 - Peter After His Restoration

PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION

NO. 2035

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, July 22, 1888

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

"When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren."

Luke 22:32.

PETER was to be sifted, so our Lord warned him. And Satan was to operate with the sieve. Satan had an intense desire to destroy Peter—indeed, he would like to destroy all the chosen of God—and therefore he desired to sift him as wheat, in the hope that he would be blown away with the husks and the chaff. To see a child of God perish would bring to the Evil One a malicious joy, for he would have wounded the heart of God. If ever the fallen spirit can be happy, he would derive happiness from defeating the Grace of God and robbing the Lord Jesus of those whom He bought with His blood.

"Satan has desired to have you"—it would be a satisfaction to him to have a Believer in his power. He was anxious to get Peter into his clutches, to give him as tremendous a shaking as he could manage. If Satan knows, as he no doubt does, concerning any one Believer that he cannot quite destroy him, then he is especially anxious to worry him. If he cannot devour the chosen, he would at least defile them—if he cannot ruin their souls, he would break their quiet. As the Revised Version puts it, Satan even asks God to have them that he may sift them as wheat. This is a curious statement, for it seems from it that the devil can pray. And that his petition may be granted him.

The margin has it, "Satan has obtained you by asking." The Lord may grant the request of the devil, himself, and yet he would not prove thereby that he had any love towards him. The Lord's wisdom may grant Satan's desire and in the very act overthrow his evil power. Let us not, then, stake our faith in the Lord's love upon His giving us the precise answer we desire, for what He gives to Satan He may see fit to deny to those whom He loves and He may do so because He loves them. It is a fact that the Evil One is permitted to test the precious metal of God's treasury.

The story in the Book of Job is no fiction or piece of imagination. It is even so that Satan desires to have choice ones of God put into his power that he may test them—that he may torment them, that he may, if possible, destroy them. The Lord may permit this as He did in the case of Job and as He did in the case of the Apostles and especially in the case of Peter. He may grant the Tempter's request and allow him to touch our bone and our flesh and see whether we will hold to our God in mortal agony.

We are not bound to know God's reasons for what He does or permits. It is sometimes sinful to enquire into those reasons. What the Lord does is right. Let that be enough for us who are His children. But we can see, sometimes, a reason why the saints should be sifted as wheat. For it appertains unto wheat to be sifted, because it is wheat. Sifting brings a desirable result with it—it is for the saints' good that they should be tried. Satan doubtless wishes that God may let the good seed fall to the ground and be destroyed. But He overrules it to separate the chaff from the wheat, and to make the wheat into clean grain, fit for storage in the King's granary.

Satan has often done us a good turn when he has meant to do us a bad one. After all, he is only a dishwasher in God's kitchen to clean His vessels. And some of them have received special scouring by means of his harsh temptations. God also may find a reason for allowing His saints to be tempted of Satan and that reason may have more relation to others than to themselves. They may have to be tested for other people's good. The testing of their faith is "more precious than that of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire," and part of its preciousness is its usefulness.

The child of God under temptation, behaving himself grandly, will become a standing example to those who are around him. "You have heard of the patience of Job." But you never would have heard of the patience of Job if Satan had not sifted him. This great treasury of instruction, the Book of Job, and all the Truth of God taught us by Job's example comes to us through God's having permitted Satan to put forth his hand and to press the Patriarch so sorely. We also may be afflicted—not so much for ourselves—as for others. And this may be remarkably the case in the instances of those of you whom God makes useful to a large circle of friends.

You live for others and therefore suffer for others. The whole of your lives will not be accounted for by yourselves but by your surroundings. As a minister I may have to be tempted because temptation is one of the best books in a minister's library. As a parent you may need affliction, because a father without a trial can give no counsel to a tempted child. Public workers may have to be tried in ways which, to a private Christian, are unnecessary. Let us accept remarkable discipline if thereby we are qualified for remarkable service. If by the roughness of our own road we are trained to conduct the Lord's sheep along their difficult pathway to the pastures on the hilltops of Glory, let us rejoice in every difficulty of the way. If Apostles and men like Peter had to be put into Satan's sieve while they were being trained for their lifework, we may not hope to escape.

Observe, dear Friends, what came before the sifting and went with the sifting. Note well that blessed "but." "But I have prayed for you." Not, "Your Brethren have prayed for you." Not, "You have prayed for yourself." But, "I have prayed for you." Jesus, that master in the art of prayer, that mighty Pleader who is our Advocate above, assures us that He has already prayed for us. "I have prayed for you," means—"before the temptation I have prayed for you. I foresaw all the danger in which you would be placed and concerning that danger I have exercised My function as High Priest and Intercessor." "I have prayed for you." What a Divine comfort is this to any who are passing through deep waters! You only go where Jesus has gone before you with His intercession. Jesus has made provision for all your future in a prayer already presented—"I have prayed for you." You may be much comforted by the prayers of a minister, or of some Christian man who has power with God. But what are all such intercessions compared with the praying of your Lord? It were well to have Noah, Samuel and Moses praying for us—but far better to have Jesus say, "I

have prayed for you." Blessed be God, Satan may have his sieve but as long as Jesus wears His breastplate we shall not be destroyed by Satan's tossing.

Notice that the principal object of the prayer of our Lord was, "that your faith fail not." He knows where the vital point lies and there He holds the shield. As long as the Christian's faith is safe, the Christian's self is safe. I may compare faith to the head of the warrior. O Lord, you have covered my head in the day of battle, for You have prayed for me that my faith fail not. I may compare faith to the heart and the Lord holds His shield over the heart that we may not be injured where a wound would be fatal. "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

Faith is the standard-bearer in every spiritual conflict. And if the standard-bearer fall, then it is an evil day—therefore our Lord prays that the standard-bearer may never fail to hold up His banner in the midst of the fray—"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." If faith fails, everything fails—courage fails, patience fails, hope fails, love fails, joy fails. Faith is the root of Divine Grace. And if this is not in order, then the foliage of the soul, which shows itself in the form of other graces, will soon begin to wither. "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

Learn a lesson from this, my Brethren—that you take care to commend your faith unto your God. Do not begin to doubt because you are tempted—that is to lay bare your breast. Do not doubt because you are attacked—that is to loosen your harness. Believe. "I had fainted," said David, "unless I had believed." It must be one thing or the other with us. Believing, or fainting—which shall it be? "Above all, taking the shield of faith." Not only taking it so that it may cover all but making this the vital point of holy carefulness. Watch in all things, but especially guard your faith. If you are careful about one thing more than another, above all be careful of your faith. "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

Our Savior's pleading goes to the point and thus it teaches us where to direct our own desires and our own prayers. He asks for us far more wisely than we shall ever learn to ask for ourselves—let us copy His petitions. And therefore it follows because of Christ's prayer that, though Peter may be very badly put to it, yet he shall be recovered, for Christ speaks of it as of an assured fact—"When you are converted." As much as to say—When you come back to your old life and your old faith, then exercise yourself usefully for your Lord. He speaks of Peter's restoration as if it were quite sure to be.

And is it not quite sure to be? If Jesus, the Beloved of the Father, prays for His people, shall He not win His suit with God? He will win it! He will uplift Peter from among the siftings where Satan has thrown him. We are sure He will, for in prospect thereof, He sets him a loving and suitable task—"When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren." The establishment and confirmation of all the rest are to hinge upon the setting up in his place of poor thrice-denying Peter.

Now, beloved Friends, I may be addressing a number of persons who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Peter did but they have fallen into a bad state and need a new conversion. I am very sorry for you but I am by no means staggered at the sight of you, for you belong to a numerous class. When sitting to see enquirers I am constantly stumbling on backsliders, who come back very sincerely and very truly and feel right pleased to find a Christian home again. I meet with many who have been outside in the world—some of them for years—attending the House of God very irregularly and seldom or never enjoying the light of God's countenance.

They have wandered so that none can tell whether they are the Lord's or not, except the Lord Himself and He always knows them that are His. I bear happy witness that the Lord brings His own back again. Though the Lord's sheep stray, yet the Good Shepherd finds them. Though the Lord's children go into the far country—they each one in due time say, "I will arise and go to my Father." It is not every prodigal that returns but only the prodigal son. In due time, the son returns to the Father's house. It is not every bit of stuff that falls on the ground that is found again. But the woman's piece of money is sure to be discovered. She will not lose it—it is hers and she values it. She sweeps the house and makes any quantity of dust until she finds it. The Lord will find His own, even though Satan tries to prevent the gracious discovery.

It may be some of you have wandered into error. May you be brought back very speedily. And if you are, we are going to say to you tonight, "Strengthen your Brethren." Possibly there has been a general decay in Divine Grace within your soul. You have lost your joy, your peace, your love, your zeal. This is sad—may the Lord restore you in answer to the prayer of Him that redeemed you. And then, when you are converted, seek to recover your Brethren from the decay of their graces which has also injured them. You will not be converted in quite the same sense as you were at first but yet you will be turned again to your old life and hope and then you are to strengthen your Brethren by aiming at their restoration to their first love and earliest zeal.

Perhaps you have been neglectful. I find that many who were good Christian people in the country, always at the House of Prayer and walking near to God, will come up to this wicked London to live and the change is a serious injury to them. They get lost to Christian society and by degrees they become deteriorated by the ungodliness of this modern Sodom. Nobody in the street wherein they live ever goes to a place of worship and they do not know anybody at the Chapel, or at the Church. And so they give up going to public worship and fall into the ways and habits of the ungodly world. They are not happy. God's children never are happy when they leave their Father. If you have ever eaten the white bread of Heaven, you will never rest content with the black ashes of earth. If the flavor of Christ's love has once been in your mouth, you are spoiled for a worldling. You will not make an expert sinner now, for your hand is out of it. Once converted, you must be a child of God, or nothing. You are ruined for this world. And if the world to come is not yours, where are you? The devil himself will not like you long—you are not of his sort. There is something about you that will not suit Satan any more than Jonah suited the whale. The whale was quite as glad to part with Jonah as Jonah was to be set free from the whale.

I see arrangements for your coming home again. The Lord devises means that His banished shall not perish—those tokens of disquiet, those starts in your sleep, those horrible forebodings, that inward hunger are all pulling at you to come home. You have been trying to feed upon the dust which is ordained to be the serpent's meat and if the Lord had not loved you, you would have done so. A deceived heart has turned you aside but in love to your soul the Lord has made you aware of it and your cry is, "I will go and return to my first husband. For then was it better with me than now."

These are tokens by which I am assured that the Lord will bring His own back. I rest confident that He will turn them and they shall be turned. And I am going to talk to backsliders about what they are to do when they do come back again. We are going to take it for granted that they will come back and to speak to them now about what it is their privilege to attempt under such gracious circumstances. "When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren." First, it is the restored man's

duty. Secondly, he has a special qualification for it. And thirdly, it will be a great blessing to him to set about it.

I. First it is HIS DUTY. He has gone astray and he has been brought back—what better can he do than to strengthen his Brethren?

He will thus help to undo the evil which he has worked. Peter must have staggered his Brethren. Some of them must have been quite frightened at him. John soon looked after him but then they were not all Johns. Full of love, John soon hunted up Peter. But the others must have felt that he was a mere reed shaken by the wind. It must have staggered the faith of the weaker sort to see that Peter, who had been such a leader among them, was among the first to deny his Lord. Therefore, Peter, you must build what you have thrown down and bind up what you have torn!

Go and talk to these people again and tell them how foolish and weak you were. Warn them not to imitate your example. You must henceforth be more bold than anybody else that you may in some measure undo the mischief which you have done. Now, think of this, any of you who have been cold towards the Lord. You have wasted months and even years, in backsliding. Try to recover lost ground. It will be almost impossible for you to do it but do at least make a serious attempt. If anybody has been staggered by your backsliding, look after him and try to bring him back and strengthen him. Ask his pardon and beg him to recover the strength of which you helped to rob him. This is the least that you can do. If almighty love has drawn you back again after sad wanderings, lay yourself out with all your heart to do good to those who may have been harmed by your sad turnings aside. Am I asking more of you than simple justice demands? Besides, how can you better express your gratitude to God than by seeking to strengthen your weak Brethren when you have been strengthened yourself?

After our first conversion, you and I were found seeking earnestly after sinners like ourselves. We had been newly brought out of the house of bondage and we longed to lead other slaves into the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. This, I say, we ought to do when first brought to Jesus' feet. But if, to our disgrace, we have turned aside and have backslidden—and if, to God's infinite glory, He has restored our souls, and made us strong again—then we ought to renew our zeal for the salvation of others and we ought to have a special eye to backsliders like ourselves. We should say, "Lord, I will show how much I thank You for restoring me, by endeavoring to find any that have been overtaken in a fault, that I may restore such in the spirit of meekness, remembering myself also, since I have been tempted and have not stood against the temptation."

Those of you whom the Good Shepherd has restored should have a quick eye for all the sickly ones of the flock and watch over these with a sympathetic care. You should say, "This is the field which I shall try to cultivate. Because in my spiritual sickness the Lord has been pleased to deal so graciously with me, I will, therefore, lay myself out to cherish others who are diseased in soul."

Do you not think, too, that this becomes our duty, because, doubtless, it is a part of the Divine design? Never let us make a mistake by imagining that God's Grace is given to a man simply with an eye to himself. Grace neither begins with man nor ends with him with an object confined to the man's own self. When God chose His ancient people Israel, it was not merely that Israel might enjoy the light but that Israel might preserve the light for the rest of the nations. When God saved you He did not save you for your own sake but for His own Name's sake, that He might through

you show forth His mercy to others.

We are windows through which the light of heavenly knowledge is to shine upon multitudes of eyes. The light is not for the windows themselves but for those to whom it comes through the windows. Have you ever thought enough about this? When the Lord brings any of you back from your backsliding, it is decidedly with this view that you may be qualified to sympathize with others and wisely guide them back to the fold. All your history, if you read it aright, has a bearing upon your usefulness to your fellow men. If you have been permitted, in an hour of weakness to grow cold, or turn aside—and if the Lord, in unspeakable compassion, has restored you to His ways—surely this must be His motive—that you may afterwards strengthen your Brethren. By the way, the very wording of the text seems to suggest the duty—we are to strengthen our "Brethren." We must do so in order that we may manifest brotherly love and thus prove our sonship towards God. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when we come back to God and feel that we are still in the family! That was the point which we debated with ourselves— we feared that we were not the Lord's. Whatever some may say about that hymn—

"It is a point I long to know, Often it causes anxious thought."

I do not give much for the man who has not sometimes had to sing it in the minor key. It is a pity that he ever should have to sing it. He will not if he walks before the Lord with care and watchfulness. But when he has been a naughty child, when his life has not been what it should be, if he does not doubt himself we must take leave to doubt for him. How can he help asking—

"Do I love the Lord or not? Am I His or am I not?"

I am inclined to say with a good experimental writer—

"He that never doubted of his state, He may—perhaps he may too late."

It is not an ill thing to try yourselves and see whether your faith is gold or dross. To have a question about your position in the heavenly family is a very painful thing and should not be endured one moment if it is in our power to solve the doubt. But if the Lord has brought you back as His child, you now know that you belong to the family and it will be suggested at once to you to do something for the Brethren. Naturally, you will look around to see whether there is any child of God to whom you can show favor for his Father's sake. You have injured all by your backsliding. And hence it is your duty, when restored to the family, to benefit them all by special consecration and double earnestness.

Let it be your delight, as well as your duty, to strengthen your Brethren. Prove that you are a Brother by acting a Brother's part. And claim your privilege as a child and exercise it as a child should—by helping another child that is in need. I think that the text within itself contains this argument.

Let us see to it, dear Friends, if we have been restored, that we try to look after our weak Brethren, that we may show forth a zeal for the honor and glory of our Lord. When we went astray we dishonored Christ. If any of these others go astray they will do the same. Therefore let us be watchful that if we can, we may prevent their being as foolish as we have been. Let us learn tenderness from our own experience and feel a deep concern for our Brethren. If one member of this Church sins we all suffer—in our reputation, at any rate. And, especially, the best known

among us have to bear a great deal because of the inconsistency of this person and of that.

Do you want us to be wounded through you? My Beloved friends, I do not think that one of you would wish to cast reproach upon your minister. Alas, Christ Himself suffers. His worst wounds are those which He receives in the house of His friends. Peter, if you ever denied your Master, mind you look well to others who are growing presumptuous as you were before your great sin. If you meet anyone who is beginning to say, "I will go with you to prison and to death," give him a gentle jog and say, "Mind you, Brother, you are going near a nasty hole into which I once fell. I pray you take warning from me."

If you speak experimentally, you will have no cause to boast but you will find in your own sin a reason why you should tenderly guard your Brethren lest they should cause like dishonor to that dear Name which is more precious, I hope, to you than life itself. "When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren." It is your duty.

II. Now secondly, HE HAS A QUALIFICATION FOR IT. This Peter is the man who, when he is brought back again, can strengthen his Brethren. He can strengthen them by telling them of the bitterness of denying his Master. He went out and wept bitterly. It is one thing to weep. It is another thing to weep bitterly. There are sweet tears, as well as salt tears. But oh, what weeping a sin costs a child of God!

I recollect a minister speaking very unguardedly—he said that the child of God lost nothing by sin except his comfort. And I thought, "Oh dear me! And is that nothing? Is that nothing?" It is such a loss of comfort that, if that were all, it would be the most awful thing in the world. The more God loves you and the more you love God, the more expensive will you find it to sin. An ordinary sinner sins cheaply—the child of God sins very dearly. If you are the King's favorite, you must mind your manners, for He will not take from you what He will take from an enemy.

The Lord your God is a jealous God, because He is a loving God. He has such love for His own chosen that if they turn aside, His jealousy burns like coals of juniper. May God keep us from ever provoking His sacred jealousy by wandering at any time into any kind of sin. Now Peter, because he could tell of the bitterness of backsliding, was the man to go and speak to anyone who was about to backslide and say, "Do not do so, my Brother. For it will cost you dearly." Again, Peter was the man to tell another of the weakness of the flesh, for he could say to him, "Do not trust yourself. Do not talk about never going aside. Remember how I talked about it? I used to be very lofty in my talk and in my feelings but I had to be brought down.

"I felt so sure that I loved my Lord and Master, that I put great confidence in myself and could not think that I should ever wander from Him. But see, see how I fell? I denied Him thrice before the time called cockcrowing." Thus, you see, Peter was wonderfully qualified by having known the bitterness of sin and by feeling the weakness of his own flesh, to go and strengthen others in these important points. But he was also qualified to bear his personal witness to the power of his Lord's prayer. He could never forget that Jesus had said to him, "I have prayed for you."

Peter could say to any Brother who had grown cold or presumptuous, "the Lord Jesus prayed for me and it was because of His prayer that I was preserved from going farther, so that I was led back and delivered from the sieve of the Evil One." Do you not think that this would strengthen any trembling one when Peter mentioned it? It is wonderful how men and women are helped by those

who have had a similar experience to themselves. Theory is all very well but to speak experimentally has a singular power about it. How one can comfort the bereaved if one has been bereaved himself!

But how little can the young and inexperienced provide consolation to those who are greatly tried, even though they are anxious to do so! And so, Brethren, if the Lord has blessed you and remembered you in His great mercy and you know the power of the prayer of the great Intercessor, you can strengthen your Brethren by reminding them of the perseverance of the Savior's love.

And could not Peter speak about the love of Jesus to poor wanderers? The Lord turned and looked upon Peter and that look broke Peter's heart and afterwards the Lord spoke to Peter by the sea and said to him, "Feed My sheep and feed My lambs." O Beloved, Peter would always remember that, and he would speak of it to any whom he found in a sad and weary condition. He would say, "My Lord was very good to me and was willing to receive me back. No, He did not wait until I came back but He came after me. He sent after me, saying, Go tell My disciples and Peter. And when He saw that I was penitent, He never rebuked me, except in such a gentle way that I was rather comforted than rebuked by what He said."

Oh, you that have wandered and Christ has restored you, comfort the wanderers when you see their tears! When you hear any word of doubt, or anything like despair from them, tell them that there is no truth in the suggestion of Satan that Christ is unwilling to forgive. Beseech them not to slander that dear heart of love which is infinitely more ready to melt towards the penitent than the penitent's heart is to melt towards it. You know it. You know that you can speak not only what you have read in the Bible but what you have felt in your own heart. You are qualified, therefore, to strengthen your Brethren.

And could not Peter fully describe the joy of restoration? "Oh," he would say, "do not wander. There is no good in it. Do not go away from Jesus. There is no profit to be found there. Come back to Him—there is such peace, such rest with Him. Never, never go away again." Peter ever afterwards in his Epistles—and we are sure that it must have been the same in his spoken ministry—would testify to the love and goodness of Christ and urge the saints to steadfastness in the faith. I would appeal to any child of God here whether he ever gained anything by going away from Christ. No, Brothers and Sisters, the old Proverb says that honesty is the best policy, but I will turn it to a higher use and say, "Holiness is the best policy."

Communion with Christ is the happiest life. If you gained all the world and did not lose your soul but only lost the light of Christ's countenance for a few days, you would have made a poor bargain. There is Heaven in every glance of His eye. There is infinite joy in every word of His mouth when He speaks comfortably to His servants. Go not away from Him. Be like Milton's angel, who lived in the sun. Abide in Christ and let His Words abide in you. Closer, closer, closer—this is the way to spiritual wealth. To follow afar off and live at a distance from Christ, even if it does not make your soul perish, yet it will wither up your joys and make you feel an unhappy man, an unhappy woman. Therefore, all those who have tried it should bear their witness and put their experience into the scale as they thus strengthen their Brethren.

III. And now, lastly, the restored Believer should strengthen his Brethren, because IT WILL BE SUCH A BENEFIT TO HIMSELF. He will derive great personal benefit from endeavoring to cherish and assist the weak ones in the family of God.

Brother, do this continually and heartily, for thus you will be made to see your own weakness. You will see it in those whom you succor. As you see how they doubt, or grow cold, or become lukewarm, you will say to yourself, "These are men of like passions with myself. I see which way I shall drift unless the Grace of God sustains me." It will lead you to throw out another anchor and get a fresh hold as you see how they yield to the tide. One man is wonderfully like another man, only that other men are better than we are. And when we are trying to strengthen them, we are not to look upon ourselves as superior beings but rather as inferior beings and say, " He fell yesterday, I may fall today. And if I do not fall today, I may tomorrow."

All the weaknesses and follies you see in others, believe that they are in yourself and that will tend to humble you. I think that a true minister is often excited to better work by what he sees of weakness in his people, because he says to himself, "Am I feeding this flock well?" Perhaps he thinks to himself, "If I had properly tended them they would not have shown all these weaknesses." And then he will begin to blame his own ministry and look to his own heart and that is a good thing for us all. We very seldom, I think, blame ourselves too, much and it is a benefit to us to see our own failings in others.

But what a comfort it must have been to Peter to have such a charge committed to him! How sure he must have felt that Jesus had forgiven him, and restored him to His confidence, when the Lord, having asked him, "Do you love Me?" said to him, "Feed My sheep and feed My lambs." Peter is all right again, or else Christ would not trust lambs to him. Peter must be all right, or else Jesus would not put the sheep under his care. It is a grand proof of our being fully restored to the Divine heart when the Lord entrusts us with work to do for His own dear children.

If you and I are made the means of strengthening our Brethren, what a comfort it will be to our hearts! I know that it is not the highest form of comfort, for Jesus would say of it, "Rejoice not in this but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." But still, to a loving child of God, it is no mean consolation to find that God is using him. I know, for my own part, that when I go to see our friends who are ill and near to die, it is a supreme consolation to see how calm they always are, without any exception. Yes, and how joyful they generally are—how triumphant in the departing hour! Then I say to myself, "Yes, my Master has owned my ministry." The seals of fresh conversions are very precious but the surest seals are these dying saints who have been nurtured in the Gospel that we have preached. They prove the truth of it, for if they do not flinch when they stand looking into eternity but even rejoice in the prospect of meeting their Lord. Then what we preach is true and our Master has not left us without witnesses. So you see that it is a great benefit to a man to strengthen his Brethren, because it becomes a comfort to his own soul.

And, Brethren, whenever any of you lay yourselves out to strengthen weak Christians, as I pray you may, you will get benefit from what you do in the holy effort. Suppose you pray with them. Well, then, you will pray a little more than if you only prayed for yourself. And anything that adds to your prayerfulness is a clear gain. I wish that you had the habit of making everybody pray with you that comes to your house, saying to them, "Now we have done our little business, let us have a word or two of prayer."

Some, even of God's people, would look at you as if you were very strange! It will do them good to look at you and learn from you the blessed habit. With regard to those who are strangers to Divine things there will often occur opportunities in which you have put them under an obligation, or they have come to you in trouble to ask advice and then you may boldly say, "Do not let us part till we have prayed." We used to have an old member of this Church who used to pray in very extraordinary places. Two women were fighting and he knelt down between them to pray and they gave over fighting directly.

Before a door when there has been a noise in the house he has begun to pray. He was better than a policeman for his prayer awed the most obstinate. They could not understand it—they thought it a strange thing and they did not care to put themselves into direct opposition to the man of God. There is a wonderful power in prayer to bless ourselves, besides the blessings that it will bring upon others. Pray with the weak ones and you will not be a weak one yourself.

Well, then, your example—if you use your example to strengthen the weak—if you carefully say to yourself, "No, I shall not do that because, though I may do it, I may do injury to some weak one." If you hesitate, if you draw back from your own rights, and say, "No, no, no. I am thinking of the weak ones"—you will get good from that self-denial. If the poor, trembling, wandering backslider is much upon your mind, you will often be very tender how you act. You will look to see where your foot is going down next time, for fear of treading upon somebody or other. And in that way you will be winning for yourself the great gain of a holy carefulness of walk and conversation—no small gain to you.

And again—suppose that in trying to strengthen these weak ones, you begin to quote Scripture to them—quote a promise to them—this will bless you. Some of you do not know which promise to quote. You do not even know where to find it in the Word. But if you are in the habit of studying Scripture with a view to strengthening the weak, you will understand it in the best way, for you will get it in a practical form and shape. You will have the Bible at your fingertips. Moreover, one of these days the text that you looked out for old Mary will suit yourself.

How often have we paid Paul with that which we meant to give to Peter! We have ourselves fed on the milk we prepared for the babes. Sometimes what we have laid up for another comes in handy for ourselves. We strangely find that we ourselves have been fed while we were feeding others, according to that promise, "He that waters shall be watered also himself."

Now, I have said all this to you that have wandered and come back and I want to say it right home to you. May the Holy Spirit speak to your inmost souls. You know who you are and how far all this applies to you. The Lord bless you.

But, dear Friends, if you have not wandered, if the Lord has kept you these twenty years close to Him and given you the light of His countenance all that time, then I think that you and I and any of us of that sort, ought to strengthen our Brethren still more. Oh, what we owe to Sovereign Grace! To be kept from wandering—what a blessing is that! Let us feel that instead of having a small debt to pay, we have a greater debt to acknowledge. Let us wake up to strengthen our Brethren. I ask this of you, members of the Church, because, in so large a Church as this, unless there is a kind of universal mutual pastorate, what can we do? You that are converted, I beseech you to strengthen your Brethren.

And then, once more—if all this ought to be done to those who are in the family, what ought we not to do for those outside—for those that have no Christ and no Savior? If you are converted yourself, seek the salvation of your children, of your own brothers and sisters and of all your household. Try to bring in your neighbors to hear the Word. Get them, if you can, under the sound of the Gospel. Why should we not fill up on Thursday night till the uppermost gallery is full? There are some friends up there tonight, and I am glad to see them. May God bless them.

I hope that the day will come when every seat will be occupied there, so that when we are preaching the Gospel we may scatter it broadcast and find a field upwards as well as downwards where the seed may fall. Oh for a blessing! May we meet in Heaven to praise the Lord our God. Amen.

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

Luke 22,32 #2620 - Christ's Prayer for Peter

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER

NO. 2620

A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 22, 1882.

"But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

Luke 22:32.

SATAN has a deadly hatred towards all good men and they may rest assured that somewhere or other, he will meet them on their way to the Celestial City. John Bunyan, in his immortal allegory, placed him in one particular spot and described him as Apollyon straddling the road and swearing by his infernal den that the pilgrim should go no further, but that then and there he would spill poor Christian's soul. But the encounter with Apollyon does not happen in the same place to all pilgrims. I have known some of them assailed by him most fiercely at the outset of their march to Zion. Their first days as Christians have been truly terrible to them by reason of the Satanic attacks they have had to endure, but, afterwards, when the devil has left them, angels have ministered to them and they have had years of peace and joy. You remember that in the case of our Savior, no sooner was He baptized than He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. In like manner, there are those whose fiercest trials from the adversary come at the beginning of their public ministry. Others meet with their greatest conflicts in middle life when, perhaps, they are too apt to think themselves secure against the assaults of Satan and to fancy that their experience and their knowledge will suffice to preserve them against his wiles. I know some, like Martin Luther, in whose voyage of life, the middle passage has been full of storm and tempest, and they have scarcely known what it was to have a moment's rest during all that period. Then there have been others, the first part of whose career has been singularly calm. Their life has been like a sea of glass—scarcely a ripple has been upon the waters—and yet, towards the end, the enemy has made up for it, and he has attacked them most ferociously right up to the last! I have known many instances of eminent saints who have had to die, sword in hand, and enter Heaven—I was about to say, with the marks of their stern conflict fresh upon them. At any rate, they have been crowned on the battlefield and have fallen asleep at the close of a tremendous fight.

With the most of us who are really going to Heaven—I will not say that it is a rule without any exception—but with the most of us, at some time or another, we shall know the extreme value of this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation of any kind, but deliver us from the Evil One, who,

Volume 45 1beyond all others, is especially to be dreaded." There is little to be got out of him, even if we conquer him. He usually leaves some mark of his prowess upon us which we may carry to our graves. It were better to leap over hedge and ditch and to go a thousand miles further on our pilgrim road than ever to have a conflict with him, except for those great purposes of which I shall presently speak for a moment. The fight with Apollyon is a terrible ordeal—an ordeal, however, which a brave Christian will never think of shirking! No, he rather will rejoice that he has an enemy worthy of his steel, that true Damascus blade with which he is armed. And, in the name of God, he will determine, though he wrestles not with flesh and blood, that he will contend against principalities and powers and with the very leader of them all—that there may be all the more Glory to the great King who makes the weakest of His followers to be so strong that they put the old dragon, himself, to flight!

So, dear Friends, rest assured that Satan hates every good man and woman, and that, some time or other, he is pretty sure to show that hatred in a very cruel and deadly attack upon them.

Further, because of his hatred, Satan earnestly desires to put Believers into his sieve that he may sift them as wheat—not that he wants to get the chaff away from them—but simply that he may agitate them. You see the corn in the sieve, how it goes up and down, to and fro. There is not a single grain of it that is allowed to have a moment's rest—it is all in commotion and confusion—and the man who is sifting it takes care to sift first one way and next, another way, and then all sorts of ways. Now, that is just what Satan does with those whom he hates, when he gets the opportunity. He sifts them in all manner of ways and puts their whole being into agitation and turmoil. When he gets a hold of us, it is a shaking and sifting, indeed! He takes care that anything like rest or breathing space shall be denied us.

Satan desires thus to sift the saints in his sieve and, at times, God grants his desire. If you look at the Revised Version, in the margin you learn the true idea of Satan having asked, or rather obtained by asking, the power to sift Peter as wheat. God sometimes gives Satan the permission to sift as wheat those who are undoubtedly His people—and then Satan tosses them to and fro, indeed. That record in the Book of Job, of Satan appearing before God, is repeated in this story of Peter, for the devil had obtained from God liberty to try and test poor boasting Peter. If Christ had not obtained of God, in answer to His intercession, the promise of the preservation of Peter, then had it gone ill, indeed, with the selfconfident Apostle! God grants to Satan permission to try His people in this way because He knows how He will overrule it to His own Glory and their good. There are certain Graces which are never produced in Christians, to a high degree, except by severe temptation. "I noticed," said one, "in what a chastened spirit a certain minister preached when he had been the subject of most painful temptation." There is a peculiar tenderness without which one is not qualified to shepherd Christ's sheep, or to feed His lambs—a tenderness without which one cannot strengthen his brethren, as Peter was afterwards to do, a tenderness which does not usually come—at any rate, to such a man as Peter, except by his being put into the sieve and tossed up and down by Satanic temptation!

Let that stand as the preface of my sermon, for I shall not have so much to say upon that as upon another point.

First, observe, in our text, the grand point of Satan's attack. We can see that from the place where Jesus puts the strongest line of defense—"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." The point

of Satan's chief attack on a Believer, then, is his faith. Observe, secondly, the peculiar danger of faith—"That your faith fail not." That is the danger—not merely lest it should be slackened and weakened, but lest it should fail. And then observe, thirdly, the Believer's grand defense—"I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

I. Notice carefully, in the first place, THE GRAND POINT OF SATAN'S ATTACK.

When he assails a child of God, his main assault is upon his faith, and I suppose that the reason is, first, because faith is the vital point in the Christian. We are engrafted into Christ by faith and faith is the point of contact between the believing soul and the living Christ. If, therefore, Satan could manage to cut through the graft there, then he would defeat the Savior's work most completely. Faith is the very heart of true godliness, for, "the just shall live by faith." Take faith away and you have torn the heart out of the gracious man. Hence, Satan, as far as he can, aims his fiery darts at a Believer's faith. If he can only destroy faith, then he has destroyed the very life of the Christian! "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Therefore, if the devil could but get our faith away from us, we should cease to be pleasing to God and should cease to be "accepted in the Beloved." Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, look well to your faith! It is the very head and heart of your being as before God. The Lord grant that it may never fail you!

I suppose that Satan also attacks faith because it is the chief of all our Divine Graces. Love, under some aspects, is the choicest, but to lead the van in conflict, faith must come first. And there are some things which are ascribed solely and entirely to faith that are never ascribed to love. If any man were to speak of our being justified by love, it would grate upon the ears of the godly! If any were to talk of our being justified by repentance, those of us who know our Bible would be up in arms against such a perversion of the Truth of God! But they may speak as long as they like of our "being justified by faith," for that is a quotation from the Scriptures. In the matter of justification, faith stands alone. It lays hold on Christ's Sacrifice and His righteousness and, thereby, the soul is justified. Faith, if I may say so, is the leader of the Graces in the day of battle and hence Satan says to his demoniacal archers, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel—shoot at faith, kill it if possible." If faith is slain, where is love, where is hope, where is repentance, where is patience? If, faith is conquered, then it is as when a standard-bearer faints. The victory is virtually won by the arch-enemy if he is able to conquer faith, for faith is the noble chieftain among the Graces of a saint! I suppose, again, that Satan makes a dead set upon the faith of the Christian became it is the nourishing Grace. All the other Graces within us derive strength from our faith. If faith is at a low ebb, love is sure to burn very feebly. If faith should begin to fail, then would hope grow dim. Where is courage? It is a poor puny thing when faith is weak. Take any Grace you please, and you shall see that its nourishing depends upon the healthy condition of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! To take faith away, therefore, would be to take the fountain away from the stream—it would be to withdraw the sun from its rays if light. If you destroy the source, of course that which comes out of it ceases. Therefore, Beloved, take the utmost possible care of your faith, for I may truly say of it that out of it are the issues of life to all your Graces. Faith is that virtuous woman who clothes the whole household in scarlet and feeds them all with luscious and strengthening food. But if faith is gone, the household soon becomes naked, poor, blind and miserable. Everything in a Christian fails when faith ceases to nourish it!

Next to this, Satan attacks faith because it is the great preserving Grace. The Apostle says, "Above all"—that is, "over all," "covering all"— "taking the shield of faith with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Sometimes, the Eastern soldiers had shields so large that they were like doors, and they covered the man from head to foot. Others of them, who used smaller shields, nevertheless handled them so deftly and moved them so rapidly that it was tantamount to the shield covering the entire person. An arrow is aimed at the forehead, up goes the shield and the sharp point rings on the metal! A javelin is hurled at the heart, but the shield turns it aside. The fierce foe aims a poisonous dart at the leg, but the shield intercepts it. Virtually, the shield is all-surrounding—and so it is with your faith. As one has well said, "It is armor upon armor, for the helmet protects the head, but the shield protects both helmet and head. The breastplate guards the breast, but the bucker or shield defends the breastplate as well as the breast." Faith is a Divine Grace to protect the other Graces—there is nothing like it and, therefore, I do not wonder that Satan attacks faith when he sees its prominent position and its important influence in the entire town of Mansoul.

I cannot help saying, also, that I wonder not that Satan attacks faith because it is the effective or efficient Grace. You know what a wonderful chapter that 11th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is—it is a triumphal arch erected in honor of what? Of faith! According to that Chapter, faith did everything—it quenched the fire, stopped the mouths of lions, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, received the dead who were raised and so on. Faith is the soul's right hand. Faith works by love, but, still, it is faith that works, and you can do nothing acceptably before God unless you do it by that right hand of faith. Hence, Satan cannot stand faith—he hates that most of all. Pharaoh tried to have all the male children thrown into the river because they were the fighting force of Israel. He did not mind having the women to grow up to bear burdens—it was the men whom he feared. And, in like manner, the devil says, "I must stamp out faith, for that is the secret of strength." He will not trouble himself so much about your other Graces—he will probably attack them when he can, but, first of all he says—"Down with faith! That is the manchild that must be destroyed!" And he aims his sharpest and deadliest darts at it.

I believe, also, that faith is attacked by Satan, most of all, because it is most obnoxious to him. He cannot endure faith. How do I know that? Why, because God loves it! And if God loves faith and if Christ crowns faith, I am sure that Satan hates it. What are we told concerning the work of Jesus being hindered by unbelief? "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Now, I will turn that text around and say of Satan, that he cannot do many mighty works against some men because of their faith! Oh, how he sneaks off when he discovers a right royal faith in a man! He knows when he has met his master and he says, "Why should I waste my arrows upon a shield carried by such a man as that? He believes in God, he believes in Christ, he believes in the Holy Spirit—he is more than a match for me." To those that are under his leadership, he cries, "To your tents!" He bids them flee away and escape, for he knows that there can be no victory for them when they come into collision with true God-given faith! He cannot bear to look at it. It blinds him—the lustrous splendor of that great shield of faith which shines as though a man did hang the sun upon his arm and bear it before him into the fray—blinds even the mighty Prince of Darkness! Satan does but glance at it and straightway he takes to flight, for he cannot stand it. He knows it is the thing which most of all helps to overthrow his kingdom and destroy his power! Therefore, Believer, cling to your faith! Be like the young Spartan warrior who would either bring his shield

home with him or be brought home dead upon his shield. "Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Whatever else you have not, "have faith in God." Believe in the Christ of God. Rest your soul's entire confidence upon the faithful promise and the faithful Promiser and, if you do so, Satan's attacks upon you will all be in vain!

That is my first point—observe the grand point of Satanic attack.

II. Now, secondly, observe THE PECULIAR DANGER OF FAITH. "That

your faith fail not."

Did Peter's faith fail? Yes, and no. It failed in a measure, but it did not altogether fail. It failed in a measure, for he was human, but it did not altogether fail, for, at the back of it, there was the superhuman power which comes through the pleading of Christ. Poor Peter! He denied his Master, yet his faith did not utterly fail and, I will show you why it did not. If you and I, Beloved, are ever permitted to dishonor God and to deny our Lord, as Peter did, yet may God in mercy keep us from the utter and entire failure of our faith as He kept Peter!

Notice, first, there was still some faith in Peter, even when he had denied his Master, for when the Lord turned and looked at him, he went out and wept bitterly. If there had still not been the true faith in Peter, the Master might have looked upon him long before a tear would have coursed down his cheeks. The Lord not only looked on Judas, but He gave him a sop with Him out of the dish. And He even let the traitor put his lips on Him and kiss Him. But all that had no weight with Judas. The reason why Christ's look had such an effect on Peter was because there was still some faith in Peter. You may blow as long as you like at the cold coals, but you will get no fire. But I have, sometimes, seen a servant kneel down when there has been just a little flame left in the coal in a corner of the grate, and she has blown it tenderly and gently so as to revive it. "It is not quite out," she says and, at last, there has been a good fire once again! May God grant that we may never come to that sad condition, but, if we do, may He, of His Grace, grant that there may still be that blessed little faith left, that weak and feeble faith which, through the breathing upon it of the Spirit of God, shall yet be fanned into a flame!

We are sure that there was this faith still in Peter or else what would he have done? What did Judas do? Judas did two things. First, he went to a priest, or to priests, and confessed to them. And then he went out and hanged himself—the two things were strangely connected. Peter did neither, yet, if he had not had faith, he might have done both. To publicly deny his Master three times and to support his denial with oaths and curses, even when that Master was close by and in His greatest need, must have put Peter into most imminent peril. And if there had not been, within his heart, faith that his Master could yet pardon and restore him, he might, in his despair, have done precisely what the traitor Judas did. Or, if he had not gone to that extremity of guilt, he would have hidden himself away from the rest of the Apostles. But, instead of doing so, we soon find him, again, with John—I do not wonder that he was with John. They were old companions, but, in addition to that, the Beloved John had so often leaned his head on the Master's bosom that he had caught the sweet infection of his Savior's tenderness and, therefore, he was just the one with whom Peter would wish to associate.

I think that if I had ever denied my Lord as Peter did, in that public way, I would have run away and hidden myself from all my former companions. But Peter did not, you see. He seemed to say to

himself, "The Master, with His dear tender heart, can still forgive me and receive me." So he clings to the disciples and especially to John. Yes, and notice that on the day of our Lord's Resurrection, Peter was the first disciple to enter the sepulcher, for, though "the other disciple did outrun Peter" and reach the grave first, "yet he went not in" until Peter led the way. "The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon," is a remarkable passage. Paul, writing concerning Christ's Resurrection, says that, "He was seen of Cephas," that is, Peter. There was some special manifestation of our blessed Master to Simon Peter who was waiting for it, and privileged to witness it—and this showed that his faith was kept from failing through the Savior's prayers.

Now, Beloved, I say no more about Peter, but I speak to you about your own faith. Are you greatly troubled? Then I pray that your faith may not fail. It is shaken. It is severely tried, but God grant that it may not fail! Something whispers within your heart, "Give up all religion, it is not true." To that lie, answer, "Get you behind me, Satan, for the religion of Jesus Christ is eternally, assuredly, Infallibly true." Cling to it, for it is your life! Or, perhaps, the fiend whispers, "It is true enough to others, but it is not meant for you, you are not one of the Lord's people." Well, if you cannot come to Christ as a saint, come to Him as a sinner! If you dare not come as a child to sit at His Table, come as a dog to eat the crumbs that fall under it! Only come and never give up your faith!

If the arch-fiend whispers, again, "You have been a deceiver! Your profession is all a mistake, or a lie!" Say to him, "Well, if it is so, there is still forgiveness in Christ for all who come unto God by Him." Perhaps you are coming to the Savior for the first time—you mean to cast yourself upon the blood and merit of Jesus even if you have never done so before. I pray for you, dear coming one! O gracious Savior, do not let Satan crush out the faith of even the weakest of Your people! Blessed Intercessor, plead for that poor trembler in whom faith is almost dying out! Great High Priest, intercede for him, that his faith may not utterly fail him and that he may still cling to You!

What is to become of us if we have not faith in Jesus? I know that there are some who seem to get on well without it. So may the dogs. So may the wild beasts. They get on well enough without the children's garments or the children's bread—but you and I cannot. The moment I am unbelieving, I am unhappy. It is not a vain thing for me to believe in Christ—it is my life, it is my strength, it is my joy! I am a lost man and it were better for me that I had never been born unless I have the privilege of believing! Give up faith? Remember what Satan said concerning Job, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life"? And our life is wrapped up in our faith in Christ! We cannot give it up and we will not give it up! Come on, fiends of Hell, or mockers of earth—we will not give it up, we will hold it fast, for it is part of the very warp and woof of our being! We believe in God and in His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And it is our great concern that our faith should be well guarded and protected, for we know the peculiar danger to which it is exposed when it is assailed by Satan.

III. Now I will close my discourse by speaking, for only a very few minutes, upon THE BELIEVER'S GREAT PRESERVATIVE AND DEFENSE.

What is the great protection of our faith? Our Savior's intercession! Prayer is always good, it is always a blessed thing, but notice that great letter-word in the text, "I have prayed for you." It is the intercession of Christ that preserves our faith—and there are three things about it which make it precious beyond all price—it is prevalent, prevenient and pertinent. First, it is prevalent, for, if Jesus pleads, He must prevail. It is prevenient, for, before the temptation comes to Peter, He says,

"I have prayed for you. Satan has but obtained, by his asking, the permission to tempt you, but I have already prayed for you."

And, then, it was pertinent, that is, to the point. Christ had prayed the best prayer possible—"that your faith fail not." Peter would not have known that this was to be the chief point of attack by Satan. He might have thought that Satan would attack his love. The Lord seems to hint at His thought about that by saying to him, afterwards, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" But the Savior knew that the hottest part of the battle would rage around Fort Faith and, therefore, He prayed that the fortress might be well garrisoned and never be captured by the enemy. And it was not!

Whenever I begin to talk to you about the intercession of Christ, I feel inclined to sit down and let you think, and look up, and listen till you hear that Voice, matchless in its music, pleading, pleading, pleading, with the Father! It were much better for you to realize it than for me to describe it. It was a blessed thing to hear one's mother pray—by accident, as we say—to pass the door that was ajar and to hear Mother pleading for her boy or her girl. It is a very touching thing to hear your child praying for her father, or your wife breathing out her warm desires for her Beloved. I do not know anything more charming than to hear, now and then, a stray prayer that was never meant to be heard on earth, but only in Heaven. I like such eaves-droppings. Oh, but listen! It is Jesus who is praying! He shows His wounds and pleads the merit of His great Sacrifice and, wonder of wonders, He pleads for me, and for you! Happy man, happy woman, to have our faith preserved by such a mighty preservative as this—the intercession of Christ!

I want you to especially notice that this intercession is the pleading of One who, in the text, seems to directly oppose Himself to the great adversary. "Satan has asked for you by asking that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you by asking," (so I will venture to paraphrase it) "that your faith fail not." There stands Satan. You cannot see him and you need not want to, but that grim monster who has made kings and princes tremble, and has plucked angels from their spheres of light, and hurled bright spirits down from Heaven to Hell, stands there to assail you! And you may well be afraid, for God, Himself, permits him to sift you! Ah, but there also stands the Ever-Blessed One, before whom an angel, fallen or unfallen, is but a tiny spark compared with the sun! There He stands, girt about the chest with the golden girdle of His faithfulness, robed in the fair white linen of His matchless righteousness. Upon His head is a crown of glory that far outshines all constellations of stars and suns! And He opposes His Divine pleading to the demoniacal asking of the fallen one. Are you still afraid? It seems to me unspeakably blessed to see it written here, "Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat," and then to see over the top of it these words, "but I have prayed for you." Oh, blessed, "but"! How it seems to cast the fallen angel back into the bottomless Pit and to bind him with chains, and set a seal upon his prison—"But I have prayed for you." Tempt on, then, O Satan! Tempt at your worst, for there is no fear when this glorious shield of gold, the intercession of the Savior, covers the entire person of the poor attacked one! "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

And then my last word is this—it is an intercession which is absolutely certain of success. In fact, He who offers it anticipates its success and discounts it by giving this precept to His servant—"and when you are converted." Sure pledge, then, that he will be converted, that he will be turned back, however far he wanders! When you are restored, "strengthen your brethren." Then, for certain, he

will be restored, or else the Savior would not have given him a precept which could only be available if a certain, unlikely contingency should occur! O you who are a true child of God, you may be drenched, but you shall never be drowned! O warrior of the Cross, your shield may be covered with fiery darts, thick as the saplings of a young forest—but no dart shall ever reach your heart! You may be wounded in head and hand and foot. You may be a mass of scars, but your life is given you! To Christ are you given and you shall come out even from between the jaws of death—and you shall overcome Satan by Christ's power! Only trust Christ! Only trust Him! Cling to your faith, Beloved. Cling to your faith! I would like to get a hold of that young man who has lately been listening to skeptical teachers, and to whisper in his ear, "Cling to your faith, young man, for, in losing that, you will lose all."

And to you who, alas, have fallen into sin after having made a profession of religion, let me say that, however far you have gone astray, still believe that Jesus is able to forgive you! Come back to Him and seek His pardon now! And you, my hoary-headed Brothers and Sisters, whose hair is whitening for Heaven, are you sorely beset by all sorts of temptations? Well, give me your hand, for I, too, know what this warfare means. Let us believe in God, my Brothers and Sisters—let us believe in God! Though He should break us down worse than ever. Though He should set us up as a target and let the devil shoot all the arrows from his quiver at us, let us still believe in God and come to this point to which my soul has come full often, and to which Job came of old, "'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Whatever He does to me—if He shall never smile upon me again—I will still believe Him, I can do no other." I dare not doubt Him! I must confide in Him! Where is there any ground for confidence if it is not in the God that cannot lie, and in the Christ of the Everlasting Covenant whom He has set forth to be the propitiation for human sin, and in the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to us?

May the blessed Trinity save and keep us all, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

LUKE 22:7-34; 54-62.

Verses 7-20. Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him, Where will You that we prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them. With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the wine, until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament—(Or, Covenant).

20, 21. In My blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table. What a shadow this revelation must have cast over that solemn feast, over the Savior's heart and over the minds of all His attached disciples! We can scarcely imagine what pangs tore His loving spirit. He could have used the language of David with even deeper emphasis, and said, "It was not an enemy that reproached Me. Then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated Me that did magnify himself against Me. Then I would have hid Myself from him. But it was you, a man My equal, My guide and My acquaintance." "The hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table." O Beloved, I pray that you and I may never betray our Master! If ever we should so fail as to deny Him, may the Lord stop us where Peter fell and never suffer us to betray Him as Judas did!

22. And truly the Son of Man goes, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! The decree of God does not lessen the responsibility of man for his action. Even though it is predetermined of God, the man does it of his own free will—and on him falls the full guilt of it.

23, 24. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. Be astonished, dear Friends, as you read, in such a connection as this, "There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." What? While yet the anxious question as to which of them was the traitor was being passed round, "Lord, is it I?" Is it so closely followed by another question, "Which of us shall be highest in the Kingdom?" Oh, the awful intrusiveness of pride and ambition! How it will come in and defile the very Holy of Holies! May God prevent our falling victims to it! The last question for a Christian to ever ask is, "How may I win honor among men?" The one question for a Believer should be, "How can I glorify my Master ?" Very often, that can best be done by taking the very lowest place in his Church.

25, 26. And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serves. Let every respect be given to the elder and let such as God honors be honored among us—but let no man honor himself, or seek honor for himself! After all, in Christ's Kingdom, the way to ascend is to descend! Did not the Master act thus? He descended that He might ascend and fill all things! And so must His disciples! Less, and less, and less, and less must we become—and so we shall really be, in His sight—more, and more, and more, and more!

27. For who is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves? Is it not he that sits at meat? But I am among you as He that serves. For He had just then taken a towel and girded Himself, and washed their feet—so becoming Servus servorum, the Servant of Servants, though He was, in very truth, the King of Kings!

28. You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations. There is a reward to the righteous, though they serve not for reward, for the Lord says—

29, 30. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Ah, but see what follows! No sooner, in this Chapter, does the thought seem to rise than it is dashed down again! The brightness always has a shadow cast across it,

31, 32. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren. We are thinking about thrones and about which of us shall have the loftiest throne—but see how the Master is thinking about the necessary while we are doting upon the superfluous! He thinks of our needs while we are dreaming of something great. What a blessing it is that we have our Savior praying for us when we, ourselves, may be fancying that we need not pray! Our hands are ready for the scepter and we are anxious to sit down on the throne—when the Lord knows that our proper place is at the footstool, pleading for mercy!

33. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. That is bravely spoken, Peter—and yet it is very foolishly said, too! He spoke out of his very heart and he meant what he said, but Peter did not know what a poor weak body Peter really was! His Master understood him far better.

34. And He said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day, before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me. And so it came to pass. Let as read a part of the sad story, beginning at the 54th verse.

54. Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the High Priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. I do not think that Peter was to be blamed for that. I do not see how he could very well have followed any nearer, for he was already a marked man. That cutting off of the ear of Malchus had made him especially prominent among the Apostles, even if he had not been well known before! He got into the crowd and came after his Master at such a distance as seemed safe for him.

55. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. I do think that he was to be blamed for that action, for it brought him into dangerous company. Better be cold, than go and warm your hands in ungodly society! 56. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him. As the flame came flashing up every now and then, she looked at him, and Peter was troubled by her gaze—she, "earnestly looked upon him."

56-59. And said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, You are also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour, later, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him; for he is a Galilean. For he got to talking to this evil company and his speech had betrayed him!

60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what you say. Another Evangelist tells us that he began to curse and to swear, as if that was the surest proof that he could possibly give that he did not know Jesus—for, when you hear a man swear, you know at once that he is no Christian—you may conclude that safely enough! So Peter thought that to prove that he was no follower of Christ, he would use such evil language as the ungodly speak.

60, 61. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. God has all things in His hands. He has servants everywhere and the rooster shall crow, by the secret movement of His Providence, just when God wills! And there is, perhaps, as much of Divine ordination about the crowing of a rooster as about the ascending of an emperor to

his throne! Things are only little and great according to their bearings and God reckoned not the crowing bird to be a small thing since it was to bring a wanderer back to his Savior, for, just as the rooster crowed, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." That was a different look from the one which the girl had given him, but that look broke his heart.

62. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the roster crows, you shall deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly. How many there are who sin with Peter, but who never weep with Peter! Oh, if we have ever transgressed in such a way as he did, let us never cease to weep! Above all, let us begin at once to lament it and rest not till the Master looks again, and says by that look, "I have blotted out all your transgressions; return unto Me."

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY

TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 22,43 #2769 - The Weakened Christ Strengthene

THE WEAKENED CHRIST STRENGTHENED

NO. 2769

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 9, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 5, 1881.

"And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him."

Luke 22:43.

I SUPPOSE that this incident happened immediately after our Lord's

first prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. His pleading became so fervent, so intense, that it forced from Him a bloody sweat. He was, evidently, in a great agony of fear as He prayed and wrestled even unto blood. We are told, by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that He "was heard in that He feared." It is probable that this angel came in answer to that prayer. This was the Father's reply to the cry of His fainting Son who was enduring an infinity of sorrow because of His people's sin and who must, therefore, be Divinely upheld as to His Manhood, lest He should be utterly crushed beneath the terrible weight that was pressing upon His holy soul.

Scarcely had our Savior prayed before the answer to His petition came. It reminds us of Daniel's supplication and of the angelic messenger who was caused to fly so swiftly that as soon as the prayer had left the Prophet's lips, Gabriel stood there with the reply to it! So, Brothers and Sisters, whenever your times of trial come, always take yourselves to your knees. Whatever shape your trouble may take—if, to you, it should even seem to be a faint representation of your Lord's agony in Gethsemane—put yourselves into the same posture as that in which He sustained the great shock that came upon Him. Kneel down and cry to your Father who is in Heaven, who is able to save you from death, who will prevent the trial from utterly destroying you, who will give you strength that you may be able to endure it and will bring you through it to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

That is the first lesson for us to learn from our Lord's experience in Gethsemane—the blessing of prayer. He has bidden us pray, but He has done more than that, for He has set us the example of prayer and, if example is, as we are sure it is, far more powerful than precept, let us not fail to imitate our Savior in the exercise of potent, prevalent, repeated supplication whenever our spirits are cast down and we are in sore distress of soul. Possibly you have sometimes said, "I feel so

sorrowful that I cannot pray." No, Brother, that is the very time when you must pray. As the spices, when bruised, give forth all the more fragrance because of the bruising, so let the sorrow of your spirit cause it to send forth the more

Volume 48 1fervent prayer to the God who is both able and willing to deliver you! You must express your sorrow in one way or another, so let it not be expressed in murmuring, but in supplication! It is a vile temptation, on the part of Satan, to keep you away from the Mercy Seat when you have most need to go there—but do not yield to that temptation! Pray till you can pray and if you find that you are not filled with the Spirit of supplication, use whatever measure of the sacred bedewing you have—and so, by-and-by, you shall have the baptism of the Spirit and prayer shall become to you a happier and more joyful exercise than it is at present. Our Savior said to His disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," yet then, above all times, He was in an agony of prayer and, in proportion to the intensity of His sorrow was the intensity of His supplication.

In our text, there are two things to note. First, our Lord's weakness. And, secondly, our Lord's strengthening.

I. First, then, let us meditate for a little while upon OUR LORD'S WEAKNESS.

That He was exceedingly weak is clear from the fact that an angel came from Heaven to strengthen Him, for the holy angels never do anything that is superfluous. They are the servants of an eminently practical God who never does that which it is unnecessary for Him to do. If Jesus had not needed strengthening, an angel would not have come from Heaven to strengthen Him. But how strange it sounds, to our ears, that the Lord of Life and Glory should be so weak that He should need to be strengthened by one of His own creatures! How extraordinary it seems that He who is "very God of very God," should, nevertheless, when He appeared on earth as Immanuel, God With Us, so completely take upon Himself our nature that He should become so weak as to need to be sustained by angelic agency! This struck some of the older saints as being derogatory to His Divine dignity, so some manuscripts of the New Testament omit this passage—it is supposed that the verse was struck out by some who claimed to be orthodox, lest, perhaps, the Arians should lay hold upon it and use it to bolster up their heresies. I cannot be sure who struck it out, but I am not altogether surprised that they should have done so. They had no right to do anything of the kind, for whatever is revealed in the Scriptures must be true, but they seemed to shudder at the thought that the Son of God should ever have been so weakened as to need the support of an angelic messenger to strengthen Him.

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, this incident proves the reality of our Savior's Manhood. Here you can perceive how fully He shares the weakness of our humanity—not in spiritual weakness, so as to become guilty of any sin— but in mental weakness, so as to be capable of great depression of spirit. And in physical weakness, so as to be exhausted to the last degree by His terrible bloody sweat. What is extreme weakness? It is something different from pain, for sharp pain evidences at least some measure of strength, but perhaps some of you know what it is to feel as if you were scarcely alive—you were so weak that you could hardly realize that you were actually living! The blood flowed, if it flowed at all, but very slowly in the canals of your veins—everything seemed stagnant within you. You were very faint, you almost wished that you could become unconscious, for the consciousness you had was extremely painful. You were so weak and sick that you

seemed almost ready to die. Our Master's words, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," prove that the shadow of impending dissolution hung darkly over His spirit, soul and body, so that He could truly quote the 22nd Psalm and say, "You have brought Me into the dust of death." I think, Beloved, that you ought to be glad it was so with your Lord, for now you can see how completely He is made like His brethren in their mental depression and physical weakness, as well as in other respects.

It will help you to get an idea of the true Manhood of Christ if you remember that this was not the only time when He was weak. He, the Son of Man, was once a Babe and, therefore, all the tender ministries that have to be exercised because of the helplessness of infancy were also necessary in His case. Wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger, that little Child was, all the while, the mighty God, though He condescended to keep His Omnipotence in abeyance in order that He might redeem His people from their sins. Doubt not His true Humanity and learn from it how tenderly He is able to sympathize with all the ills of childhood and, all the griefs of boyhood which are not so few or so small as some people imagine!

Besides being thus an Infant and gradually growing in stature just as other children do, our Lord Jesus was often very weary. How the angels must have wondered as they saw Him, who sways the scepter of universal sovereignty and marshals all the starry hosts according to His will, as He, "being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well" at Sychar, waiting for the woman whose soul He had gone to win and, wiping the sweat from His brow and resting Himself after having traveled over the burning acres of the land! The Prophet Isaiah truly said that "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary." That is the Divine side of His glorious Nature. "Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." That was the Human side of His Nature. We read that "He did eat nothing" during the forty days' temptation in the wilderness and, "He afterwards hungered." Have any of you ever known what it has been to suffer the bitterness of hunger? Then remember that our Lord Jesus Christ also endured that pang. He, whom we rightly worship and adore as "God Blessed Forever," as the Son of Man, the Mediator between God and men, hungered! And He also thirsted, for He said to the woman at the well, "Give Me to drink."

In addition to this, our Savior was often so weary that He slept, which is another proof of His true Humanity. He was so tired, once, that He slept even when the boat was tossing to and fro in a storm and was ready to sink. On one occasion we read that the disciples "took Him even as He was in the boat," which seems to me to imply even more than it says, namely, that He was so worn out that He was scarcely able to get into the boat, but, "they took Him even as He was," and there He fell asleep. We know, moreover, that "Jesus wept"—not merely once, or twice, but many times. And we also know what completes the proof of His Humanity— that He died. It was a strange phenomenon that He, to whom the Father has given, "to have life in Himself," should have been called to pass through the gloomy shades of death, that He might in all points be made like unto His brethren and so be able to fully sympathize with us! O you weak ones, look how weak your Lord became that He might make you strong! We might read that familiar passage, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich," in a slightly different way—"though He was strong, yet for your sakes He became weak, that you, through His weakness might be strong." Therefore, Beloved, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

What was the reason for the special weakness of our Savior when in the Garden of Gethsemane? I cannot now go fully into that matter, but I want you to notice what it was that tried Him so severely there. I suppose, first, it was contact with sin. Our Savior had always seen the effects of sin upon others, but it had never come home to Him so closely as it did when He entered that garden, for there, more than ever before, the iniquity of His people was made to meet upon Him—and that contact aroused in Him a holy horror! You and I are not perfectly pure, so we are not as horrified at sin as we ought to be, yet sometimes we can say, with the Psalmist, "Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law." But for our gracious Savior—listen to the Inspired Words, they are none of mine—to be "numbered with the transgressors," must have been an awful thing to His pure and holy soul! He seemed to shrink back from such a position and it was necessary that He should be strengthened in order that He might be able to endure the contact with that terrible mass of iniquity!

But He had, in addition, to bear the burden of that sin. It was not sufficient for Him to come into contact with it—but it is written, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And as He began to fully realize all that was involved in His position as the great Sin-Bearer, His spirit seemed to droop and He became exceedingly weak. Ah, Sir, if you have to bear the burden of your own sin when you appear before the Judgment Seat of God, it will sink you to the lowest Hell! But what must Christ's agony have been when He was bearing the sin of all His people? As the mighty mass of their guilt came rolling upon Him, His Father saw that the Human soul and the Human body both needed to be upheld, otherwise they would have been utterly crushed before the atoning work had been accomplished.

Contact with sin and the bearing of sin's penalty were reason enough to produce the Savior's excessive weakness in Gethsemane, but, in addition, He was conscious of the approach of death. I have heard some people say that we ought not to shrink from death, but I believe that in proportion as a man is a good man, death will be distasteful to him. You and I have become, to a large extent, familiarized with the thought of death. We know that we must die—unless the Lord should come soon— for all who have gone before us have done so—the seeds of death are sown in us and, like some fell disease, they are beginning to work within our nature. It is natural that we should expect to die, for we know that we are mortal. If anybody were to tell us that we should be annihilated— any reasonable and sensible man would be horrified at the idea—for that is not natural to the soul of man. Well, now, death was as unnatural to Christ as annihilation would be to us! It had never come to be a part of His Nature. His holy soul had none of the seeds of death in it and His untainted body—which had never known any kind of disease or corruption, but was as pure as when, first of all, "that holy thing" was created by the Spirit of God—that also shrank back from death! There were not in it any of the things which make death natural and, therefore, because of the very purity of His Nature, He recoiled at the approach of death and needed to be especially strengthened in order to meet "the last enemy."

Probably, however, it was the sense of utter desertion that was preying upon His mind and so produced that extremity of weakness. All His disciples had failed Him and presently would forsake Him. Judas had lifted up his heel against Him and there was not one of all His professed followers who would faithfully cleave to Him. Kings, princes, scribes and rulers were all united against Him—and of the people, there were none with Him. Worst of all, by the necessity of His expiatory Sacrifice and His Substitution for His people, His Father, Himself, withdrew the Light of His

Countenance from Him and, even in the garden, He was beginning to feel that agony of soul which, on the Cross, wrung from Him that doleful cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And that sense of utter loneliness and desertion, added to all that He had endured, made Him so exceedingly weak that it was necessary that He should be specially strengthened for the ordeal through which He had still to pass.

II. Now, in the second place, let us meditate for a little while upon OUR LORD'S STRENGTHENING. "There appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him."

It is night and there He kneels, under the olives, offering up, as Paul says, "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death." While wrestling there, He is brought into such a state of agony that He sweats great drops of blood and, suddenly, there flashes before Him, like a meteor from the midnight sky, a bright spirit that had come straight from the Throne of God to minister to Him in His hour of need.

Think of the condescension on Christ's part to allow an angel to come and strengthen Him. He is the Lord of angels as well as of men. At His bidding, they fly more swiftly than the lightning flash to do His will. Yet, in His extremity of weakness, He was succored by one of them! It was a wondrous stoop for the infinitely-great and ever-blessed Christ of God to consent that a spirit of His own creation should appear unto Him and strengthen Him.

But while I admire the condescension which permitted one angel to come, I equally admire the self-restraint which allowed only one to come, for, if He had so pleased, He might have appealed to His Father and He would at once have sent to Him "more than twelve legions of angels." No, He did not make such a request. He rejoiced to have one to strengthen Him, but He would not have any more. Oh, what matchless beauties are combined in our blessed Savior! You may look on this side of the shield and you will perceive that it is of pure gold. Then you may look on the other side of it, but you will not discover that it is brass, as in the fable, for it is gold all through! Our Lord Jesus is "altogether lovely." What He does, or what He refrains from doing equally deserves the praises of His people.

How could the angel strengthen Christ? That is a very natural enquiry, but it is quite possible that when we have answered that question as well as we can, we shall not have given a full and satisfactory reply to it. Yet I can conceive that, in some mysterious manner, an angel from Heaven may have actually infused fresh vigor into the physical constitution of Christ. I cannot positively affirm that it was so, but it seems to me a very likely thing. We know that God can suddenly communicate new strength to fainting spirits and, certainly, if He willed it, He could thus lift up the drooping head of His Son and make Him feel strong and resolute again.

Perhaps it was so, but, in any case, it must have strengthened the Savior to feel that He was in pure company. It is a great joy to a man who is battling for the right against a crowd who love the wrong, to find a comrade by his side who loves the Truth of God as he loves it. To a pure mind, obliged to listen to the ribald jests of the licentious, I know of nothing that is more strengthening than to get a whisper in the ear from one who says, "I, too, love that which is chaste and pure, and hate the filthy conversation of the wicked." So, perhaps, the mere fact of that shining angel standing by the Savior's side, or reverently bowing before Him, may in itself have strengthened Him.

Next to that, was the tender sympathy which this angelic ministration proved. I can imagine that all the holy angels leant over the battlements of Heaven to watch the Savior's wondrous life. And now that they see Him in the garden and perceive, by His whole appearance, and His desperate agony, that death is drawing to Him, they are so astonished that they crave permission that at least one of their number shall go down to see if He cannot carry succor to Him from His Father's house above. I can imagine the angels saying, "Did we not sing of Him at Bethlehem when He was born? Did not some of us minister to Him when He was in the desert and among wild beasts, hungry after His long fast and terrible temptation? Has He not been seen of angels all the while He has been on earth! Oh, let some one of us go to His relief!" And I can readily suppose that God said to Gabriel, "Your name means, The Strength of God—go and strengthen your Lord in Gethsemane," "And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven strengthening Him." And I think that He was strengthened, at least in part, by observing the sympathy of all the heavenly host with Him in His season of secret sorrow. He might seem to be alone as Man, but as Lord and King, He had on His side an innumerable company of angels who waited to do His will—and here was one of them, come to assure Him that He was not alone, after all.

Next, no doubt, our Savior was comforted by the angel's willing service. You know, dear Brothers and Sisters, how a little act of kindness will cheer us when we are very low in spirit. If we are despised and rejected of men. If we are deserted and defamed by those who ought to have dealt differently with us, even a tender look from a child will help to remove our depression! In times of loneliness it is something even to have a dog with you, to lick your hand and show you such kindness as is possible from him. And our blessed Master, who always appreciated and still appreciates the least service rendered to Him—for not a cup of cold water, given to a disciple in Christ's name, shall lose its reward—was cheered by the devotion and homage of the ministering spirit that came from Heaven to strengthen Him! I wonder if the angel worshipped Him—I think that He could do no less and it must have been something to worship the blood-red Son of God. Oh, that any of us could have paid Him such homage as that! The time for such special ministry as that is now over, yet my faith seems to bring Him back here, at this moment, just as if we were in Gethsemane. I adore You, blessed eternal God—never more Godlike than when You did prove Your perfect Manhood by sweating great drops of blood in the awful weakness of Your depression in the Garden of Sorrow!

Perhaps, too, the angel's presence comforted and strengthened the Savior as being a sort of foretaste of His final victory. What was this angel but the pioneer of all the heavenly host that would come to meet Him when the fight was over? He was one who, in full confidence of His Lord's victory, had flown before the rest to pay homage to the conquering Son of God, who would tread the old dragon beneath His feet! You remember how, when Jesus was born, first there came one angel who began to speak of Him to the shepherds, "and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The first angel had, as it were, stolen a march upon his brethren, and got there before them, but, no sooner was the wondrous news proclaimed through Heaven's streets, than every angel resolved to overtake him before his message was completed! So, here again is one that had come as an outrider to remind His Lord of His ultimate victory—and there were many more afterwards to come with the same glad tidings—but, to the Savior's heart, that angel's coming was a token that He would lead captivity captive and that myriads of other bright

spirits would crowd around Him and cry, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; that the King of Glory, fresh from His blood-red shame, may enter into His heavenly and eternal inheritance!"

Yet once more, is it not very likely that this angel brought the Savior a message from Heaven? The angels are generally God's messengers, so they have something to communicate from Him and, perhaps, this angel, bending over the Savior's prostrate form, whispered in His ear, "Be of good cheer. You must pass through all this agony, but You will thereby save an innumerable multitude of the sons and daughters of men who will love and worship You and Your Father forever and forever. He is with You even at this moment. Though He must hide His face from You because of the requirements of justice that the Atonement may be complete, His heart is with You and He loves You always." Oh, how our Lord Jesus must have been cheered if some such words as these were whispered into His ears! Now, in closing, let us try to learn the lessons of this incident. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you and I may have to pass through great griefs— certainly ours will never be so great as those of our Divine Master—but we may have to follow through the same waters. Well, at such times, as I have already said, let us resort to prayer and let us be content to receive comfort from the humblest instrumentality. "That is too simple an observation," you say. It is a very simple one, but it is one that some people have need to remember. You remember how Naaman the Syrian was healed through the remark of a little captive girl and, sometimes, great saints have been cheered by the words of very little people. You remember how Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted "a child's hymn"? It was just like he—great, glorious, simple-minded child-man that he was. He said what you and I must sometimes have felt that we needed—a child's hymn—a child's joyful song to cheer us up in our hour of depression and sorrow!

There are some people who seem as if they would not be converted unless they can see some eminent minister. Even that will not suit some of them—they need a special revelation from Heaven. They will not take a text from the Bible—though I cannot conceive of anything better than that—but they think that if they could dream something, or if they could hear words spoken in the cool of the evening by some strange voice in the sky, then they might be converted. Well, Brothers and Sisters, if you will not eat the apples that grow on trees, you must not expect angels to come and bring them to you! We have a more sure word of testimony in the Bible than we can have anywhere else. If you will not be converted by that Word, it is a great pity—it is much more than a pity, it is a great sin! If your Lord and Master condescended to receive consolation from an angel whom He had Himself created, you ought to be willing to gather comfort from the feeblest speech of the poorest person—from the least of the people of God when they try to cheer you.

I have known an old professor say of a young minister, "It is no use for me to hear him, for he has not had the experience that I have had, so how can he instruct or help me?" O Sirs, I have known many old saints get more comfort out of godly boys than they did from those of their own age! God knows how, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, to perfect praise and I have never heard that He has done that out of the mouths of old men! Why is that? Because they know too much! But the children do not know anything and, therefore, out of their mouths the praise of God is perfect. So let us never despise God's messengers, however humble they may be.

The next lesson is while you should be thankful for the least comforter, yet, in your times of deepest need, you may expect the greatest comforters to come to you. Let me remind you that an

angel appeared to Joseph when Herod was seeking Christ's life. Then, later, angels appeared to Christ when the devil had been tempting Him. And now, at Gethsemane, when there was a peculiar manifestation of diabolical malice, for it was the hour of the powers of darkness—then, when the devil was loose and doing his utmost against Christ—an angel came from Heaven to strengthen Him. So, when you are in your heaviest trials, you shall have your greatest strength. Perhaps you will have little to do with angels till you get into deep trouble and then shall the promise be fulfilled, "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." They are always ready to be your keepers, but, in the matter of spiritual strengthening, these holy spirits may have little to do with some of you until you stand foot to foot with Apollyon and have to fight stern battles with the Evil One himself. It is worthwhile to go through rough places to have angels to bear you up! It is worthwhile to go to Gethsemane if there we may have angels from Heaven to strengthen us! So, be of good comfort, Brothers and Sisters, whatever lies before you. The darker your experience is, the brighter will be that which comes out of it. The disciples feared as they entered the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration, but when they had passed right into it, they saw Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in Glory! O you who are the true followers of Christ, fear not the clouds that lower darkly over you, for you shall see the brightness behind them and the Christ in them! And your spirits shall be blessed.

But if you are not believing in Christ, I am indeed grieved for you, for you shall have the sorrow without the solace—the cup of bitterness without the angel—the agony, and that forever, without the messenger from Heaven to console you! Oh, that you would all believe in Jesus! God help you so to do for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Luke 22:14-46.

Verses 14-16. And when the hour was come, He sat down and the

twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. And it is fulfilled, for Christ Himself is the Lamb of our Passover. His blood has been shed and sprinkled. His people have been brought up out of their Egyptian bondage and, by faith, they feed upon Him and are glad. How sweetly the Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper and how graciously did our Savior thus teach us that, as a rule, He does not make violent changes in the development of His people's spiritual life, but He leads them on gradually from one stage to another! There may be, sometimes, very sudden elevations, but, as a general rule, we go from strength to strength, a step at a time, and the Truth of God is revealed to us little by little.

17, 18. So He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come. This was the Passover cup—the cup with which they concluded the paschal supper. At such times they also usually began to chant a Psalm in happy unison. Just at that point, Christ interjected the first part of the celebration of the new ordinance—the Lord's Supper, into which the paschal supper was to melt. 19. So He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me. It was clearly impossible

that He could have meant that bread to be literally His body, because His body was there at the table! Therefore, the misunderstanding, or misrepresentation of the Church of Rome is altogether without excuse. Our Savior plainly intended to say, "This bread represents My body; it is an emblem, a symbol, of My body." If this had been spoken concerning the bread after Christ had been dead and gone, and not before, there might have been some warrant for the teaching of the Papists, but there cannot be any such warrant, as He used the words while He was sitting there with His Apostles. Let us be careful not to lose the true meaning of Christ's words while we combat the false interpretation that has been given to them.

20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you. He could not have meant that, literally, that cup was the New Covenant—I never heard of anybody who thought He did. Why, then, take one part of the ordinance literally, if not the other? But our Lord did mean that the contents of that cup represented the blood which seals and ratifies the Eternal Covenant on which our hopes are built.

21. But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table. Lamentable circumstance—sad index of what often still occurs! The worst traitors to Christ are not outside, but inside the visible Church. There they have the best opportunity for doing mischief. There they can give the unkindest cut of all. God grant that none of us may be among that miserable number!

22. And truly the Son of Man goes as it was determined, but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! The fact that it was determined in the eternal decrees of God, that Christ should die, did not at all diminish the responsibility of all who had a share in bringing about that death. Learn, Beloved, to believe firmly in Divine Predestination without doubting human responsibility. Even though you may not be able to show how these two things agree, do not be anxious about that matter! Be satisfied to believe what you cannot understand. Both these things are true and they are, both of them, in this verse.

23, 24. And they began to enquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. What a strange thing that it should have been so! Is there any such strife among us here? If so, how utterly unworthy are we to be the disciples of such a Master as our Lord Jesus Christ!

25, 26. And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serves. You know, Brothers, that it always will be so. If a man tries to be great in the Church, somehow or other his Brothers generally think very little of him! But he who is willing to serve—whose one ambition it is to lay himself out for the Glory of his Master, and for the general good—that man usually has a great deal more honor than he would have expected to receive. The way to be great in the Church is to be serviceable to all around us, to be meek and lowly, to be willing to wait upon others. We have good reason for being the servants of our Brothers and Sisters when we remember the humble position that our Lord Himself assumed.

27. For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that serves? Is it not he that sits the table? But I am among you as He that serves. He served in the very humblest capacity, for did He not even wash the disciples' feet? And if He, who was the greatest of all, thus condescended to

perform the lowliest service, who among us shall be so lifted up as to suppose that no common work is good enough for him? Brethren, we must be humble, or else we shall be humbled! And let me remark that the latter experience is by no means a pleasant one, while the former experience is most sweet and gracious. God give us the Grace to be humble!

28-30. You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Yes, there are thrones and a Kingdom for those who are faithful to the King of kings! But there is something else to think of beside that kind of glory, for notice our Savior's next words.

31. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. And between us and the Kingdom there will be struggles and dangers—and watchfulness and wrestling prayer will be required of us. And here is our only hope of escape from the perils of the way, as it was with poor Peter—

32-34. But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your Brothers. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before you shall thrice deny that you know Me. Though Peter did not really know himself, Christ knew him. That is one of our comforts—that the Lord Jesus Christ foresees all future ill and so provides against it. He looks down into our nature and deals with us as we need to be dealt with. It is well for us that we are in His hands.

35-40. And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough. And He came out, and went, as He was known, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that you enter not into temptation. Or, "into trial." We do not often enough present that petition, "Lead us not into temptation." We are not able to bear temptation if it goes beyond a certain point—and it is a greater mercy to escape temptation than it is to pass through it and to overcome it. I mean, of course, only in some respects. We may ask to be delivered from the Evil One if we must be tempted by him, but our first prayer should be that we may not enter into temptation.

41, 42. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done. We can read these words in a calm, quiet tone, but they were uttered by our Lord with an intensity of agony which we can scarcely call up before our mind's eyes. So terrible was that agony that our Savior became utterly weak and faint through the intensity of His pleading.

43, 44. And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly. More and more intense was that brief prayer as His supplication was continued.

44. And His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Luke was a physician, you know, so he was the most likely one to record this phenomenon. It has happened—so we have been told— to some other persons in intense fright or agony, that their sweat has been tinged with blood. But we never remember reading or hearing of anyone but our Lord of whom it could be said, "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

45. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow. Great sorrow may have quite opposite effects upon different men. You have, perhaps, sometimes noticed that intoxication produces upon some men exactly the opposite effect to that which it produces upon others—some become irritable and noisy, while others become taciturn and quiet. It is also quite a matter of fact that great sorrow has various effects upon different minds. In the Savior's case, it aroused Him to an awful agony of earnestness in prayer. In the disciples case, it sent them to sleep.

46. And said unto them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The great trial for them, as well as for their Lord, was close at hand. It was late at night and they were drowsy and sleepy, yet no time is amiss for supplication. Prayer is never out of season and never unnecessary. We never know when temptation is near, so let us pray without ceasing to Him who is able to preserve us from temptation, or to deliver us out of it.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 22,44 #1199 - The Agony in Gethsemane

THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE

NO. 1199

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING. OCTOBER 18, 1874,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was,

as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Luke 22:44.

OUR Lord, after having eaten the Passover and celebrated the supper with His disciples, went with them to the Mount of Olives and entered the Garden of Gethsemane. What induced Him to select that place to be the scene of His terrible agony? Why there, in preference to anywhere else would He be arrested by His enemies? May we not conceive that as in a garden Adam's self-indulgence ruined us, so in another garden the agonies of the second Adam should restore us? Gethsemane supplies the medicine for the ills which followed upon the forbidden fruit of Eden. No flowers which bloomed upon the banks of the four-fold river were ever so precious to our race as the bitter herbs which grew hard by the black and sullen stream of Kidron.

May not our Lord also have thought of David, when on that memorable occasion he fled out of the city from his rebellions son, and it is written, "The king also, himself, passed over the brook Kidron," and he and his people went up barefoot and bareheaded, weeping as they went? Behold, the greater David leaves the Temple to become desolate and forsakes the city which had rejected His admonitions! And with a sorrowful heart He crosses the foul brook to find in solitude a solace for His woes. Our Lord Jesus, moreover, meant us to see that our sin changed everything about Him into sorrow—it turned His riches into poverty, His peace into travail, His glory into shame—and so the place of His peaceful retirement, where, in hallowed devotion He had been nearest Heaven in communion with God, our sin transformed into the focus of His sorrow, the center of His woe. Where He had enjoyed most, there He must be called to suffer most.

Our Lord may, also, have chosen the Garden because, needing every remembrance that could sustain Him in the conflict, He felt refreshed by the memory of former hours there which had passed away so quietly. He had prayed there and gained strength and comfort. Those gnarled and twisted olives knew Him well—there was scarcely a blade of grass in the Garden which He had not knelt upon. He had consecrated the spot to fellowship with God! What wonder, then, that He preferred this favored soil? Just as a man would choose, in sickness, to lie in his own bed, so Jesus chose to endure His agony in His own place of prayer where the recollections of former communings with His Father would come vividly before Him.

But, probably, the chief reason for His resort to Gethsemane was that it was His well-known haunt. John tells us, "Judas also knew the place." Our Lord did not wish to conceal Himself. He did not need to be hunted down like a thief, or searched out by spies. He went boldly to the place where His enemies knew that He was accustomed to pray, for He was willing to be taken to suffering and to death. They did not drag Him off to Pilate's Hall against His will, but He went with them voluntarily. When the hour was come for Him to be betrayed—there He was, in a place where the traitor could readily find Him. And when Judas would betray Him with a kiss, His cheek was ready to receive the traitorous salutation. The blessed Savior delighted to do the will of the Lord though it involved obedience unto death!

We have thus come to the gate of the Garden of Gethsemane, let us now enter—but first, let us take off our shoes, as Moses did, when he saw the bush which burned with fire and was not consumed. Surely we may say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" I tremble at the task which lies before me, for how shall my feeble speech describe those agonies for which strong crying and tears were scarcely an adequate expression? I desire, with you, to survey the sufferings of our Redeemer, but oh, may the Spirit of God prevent our mind from thinking anything amiss, or our tongue from speaking even one word which would be derogatory to Him either in His immaculate Manhood or His glorious Godhead!

It is not easy, when you are speaking of one who is both God and Man, to observe the exact line of correct speech. It is easy to describe the Divine side in such a manner as to trench upon the human, or to depict the human at the cost of the Divine. Make me not an offender for a word if I should err! A man had need, himself, to be Inspired, or to confine himself to the very Words of Inspiration to fitly speak, at all times, upon the great "mystery of godliness"—God manifest in the flesh—and especially when he has to dwell most upon God so manifest in suffering flesh that the weakest traits in manhood become the most conspicuous.

O Lord, open my lips that my tongue may utter right words! Meditating upon the agonizing scene in Gethsemane we are compelled to observe that our Savior endured, there, a grief unknown to any previous period of His life. Therefore we will commence our discourse by raising the question, WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF THE PECULIAR GRIEF OF GETHSEMANE? Our Lord was the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief" throughout His whole life and yet, though it may sound paradoxical, I scarcely think there existed on the face of the earth a happier man than Jesus of Nazareth! The griefs which He endured were counterbalanced by the peace of purity, the calm of fellowship with God and the joy of benevolence. This last, every good man knows to be very sweet—and all the sweeter in proportion to the pain which is voluntarily endured for the carrying out of its kind designs. It is always joy to do good, cost what it may.

Moreover, Jesus dwelt at perfect peace with God at all times. We know that He did so, for He regarded that peace as a choice legacy which He could bequeath to His disciples. Before He died, He said to them, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." He was meek and lowly of heart, and therefore His soul had rest. He was one of the meek who inherit the earth. He was one of the peacemakers who are and must be blessed. I think I am not mistaken when I say that our Lord was far from being an unhappy Man. But in Gethsemane all seems changed, His peace is gone, His calm is turned to tempest.

After supper our Lord had sung a hymn, but there was no singing in Gethsemane. Down the steep bank which led from Jerusalem to the Kidron He talked very cheerfully, saying, "I am the Vine and you are the branches," and that wondrous prayer which He prayed with His disciples after that discourse is full of majesty—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am"—is a very different prayer from that inside Gethsemane's walls, where He cries, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Notice that all His life you scarcely find Him uttering an expression of grief. But here He says, not only by His sighs and by His bloody sweat, but in so many words, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death."

In the Garden the Sufferer could not conceal His grief and does not appear to have wished to do so. Thrice he ran backward and forward to His disciples—He let them see His sorrow and appealed to them for sympathy. His exclamations were very piteous and His sighs and groans were, I doubt not, very terrible to hear. Chiefly did that sorrow reveal itself in bloody sweat, which is a very unusual phenomenon, although I suppose we must believe those writers who record instances somewhat similar. The old physician, Galen, gives an instance in which, through extremity of horror, an individual poured forth a discolored sweat, so nearly crimson as, at any rate, to appear to have been blood. Other cases are given by medical authorities.

We do not, however, on any previous occasion observe anything like this in our Lord's life. It was only in the last grim struggle among the olive trees that our Champion resisted unto blood, agonizing against sin. What ailed You, O Lord, that You should be so sorely troubled just then? We are clear that His deep sorrow and distress were not occasioned by any bodily pain. Our Savior had doubtless been familiar with weakness and pain, for He took our sicknesses, but He never, in any previous instance, complained of physical suffering. Neither at the time when He entered Gethsemane had He been grieved by any bereavement. We know why it is written, "Jesus wept"—it was because His friend Lazarus was dead—but here there was no funeral, nor sick bed, nor particular cause of grief in that direction.

Nor was it the revived remembrance of any past reproaches which had lain dormant in His mind. Long before this "reproach had broken His heart," He had known to the full the vexations of contumely and scorn. They had called Him a "drunken man and a winebibber." They had charged Him with casting out devils by the Prince of the devils—they could not say more and yet He had bravely faced it all—it could not be possible that He was now sorrowful unto death for such a cause. There must have been a something sharper than pain, more cutting than reproach, more terrible than bereavement, which now, at this time, grappled with the Savior and made Him "exceedingly sorrowful, and very heavy."

Do you suppose it was the fear of coming scorn, or the dread of crucifixion? Was it terror at the thought of death? Is not such a supposition impossible? Every man dreads death and as Man, Jesus could not but shrink from it. When we were originally made, we were created for immortality and, therefore, to die is strange and uncongenial work to us. The instincts of self-preservation cause us to start back from it, but surely in our Lord's case that natural cause could not have produced such specially painful results. It does not make even such poor cowards as we are sweat great drops of blood! Why, then, should it work such terror in Him?

It is dishonoring to our Lord to imagine Him less brave than His own disciples, yet we have seen some of the most feeble of His saints triumphant in the prospect of departing. Read the stories of

the martyrs and you will frequently find them exultant in the near approach of the most cruel sufferings. The joy of the Lord has given such strength to them that no cowardly thought has alarmed them for a single moment—they have gone to the stake, or to the block with songs of victory upon their lips! Our Master must not be thought of as inferior to His boldest servants! It cannot be that He should tremble where they were brave. Oh, no! The noblest spirit among yon band of martyrs is the Leader, Himself, who in suffering and heroism surpassed them all! None could so defy the pangs of death as the Lord Jesus, who, for the joy which was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame!

I cannot conceive that the pangs of Gethsemane were occasioned by any extraordinary attack from Satan. It is possible that Satan was there and that his presence may have darkened the shade—but he was not the most prominent cause of that hour of darkness. This much is quite clear, that our Lord, at the commencement of His ministry, engaged in a very severe duel with the Prince of Darkness, and yet we do not read concerning that temptation in the wilderness a single syllable as to His soul's being exceedingly sorrowful. Neither do we find that He "was sore amazed and was very heavy." Nor is there a solitary hint at anything approaching to bloody sweat. When the Lord of Angels condescended to stand foot to foot with the Prince of the power of the air, He had no such dread of him as to utter strong cries and tears and fall prostrate on the ground with threefold appeals to the Great Father.

Comparatively speaking, to put His foot on the old serpent was an easy task for Christ and did but cost Him a bruised heel. But this Gethsemane agony wounded His very soul even unto death. What is it then, do you think, that so peculiarly marks Gethsemane and the griefs thereof? We believe that, then, the Father put Him to grief for us. It was then that our Lord had to take a certain cup from the Father's hand. Not from the Jews, not from the traitor, Judas. Not from the sleeping disciples, nor from the devil came the trial, then—it was a cup filled by One whom He knew to be His Father, but Who, nevertheless, He understood to have appointed Him a very bitter potion, a cup not to be drunk by His body and to spend its gall upon His flesh, but a cup which specially amazed His soul and troubled His inmost heart.

He shrunk from it and, therefore, you can be sure that it was a draught more dreadful than physical pain, since from that He did not shrink. It was a potion more dreadful than reproach—from that He had not turned aside. It was more dreadful than Satanic temptation—that He had overcome! It was a something inconceivably terrible and amazingly full of dread—which came from the Father's hand. This removes all doubt as to what it was, for we read, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin." "The Lord has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all." He has made Him to be sin for us though He knew no sin.

This, then, is that which caused the Savior such extraordinary depression. He was now about to "taste death for every man." He was about to bear the curse which was due to sinners because He stood in the sinner's place and must suffer in the sinner's stead. Here is the secret of those agonies which it is not possible for me to set forth before you! It is so true that—

"'Tis to God, and God alone, That His griefs are fully known."

Yet would I exhort you to consider these griefs, that you may love the Sufferer. He now realized, perhaps for the first time, that He was to be a SinBearer. As God He was perfectly holy and

incapable of sin. And as Man He was without original taint—He was spotlessly pure—yet He had to bear sin, to be led forth as the Scapegoat bearing the iniquity of Israel upon His head. He had to be taken and made a Sin Offering—and as a loathsome thing, (for nothing was more loathsome than the sin offering)—to be taken outside the camp and utterly consumed with the fire of Divine wrath!

Do you wonder that His infinite purity started back from that? Would He have been what He was if it had not been a very solemn thing for Him to stand before God in the position of a sinner? Yes, and as Luther would have said it, to be looked upon by God as if He were all the sinners in the world, and as if He had committed all the sin that ever had been committed by His people—for it was all laid on Him and on Him must the vengeance due for it all be poured. He must be the center of all the vengeance and bear away upon Himself what ought to have fallen upon the guilty sons of men. To stand in such a position, when once it was realized, must have been very terrible to the Redeemer's holy soul.

Then, also, the Savior's mind was intently fixed upon the dreadful nature of sin. Sin had always been abhorrent to Him, but now His thoughts were engrossed with it. He saw its worse than deadly nature, its heinous character and horrible aim. Probably at this time, beyond any former period, He had, as Man, a view of the wide range and all-pervading evil of sin and a sense of the blackness of its darkness—and the desperateness of its guilt as being a direct attack upon the Truth of God. Yes, and upon the very being of God! He saw, in His own Person, to what lengths sinners would go. He saw how they would sell their Lord, like Judas, and seek to destroy Him as did the Jews. The cruel and ungenerous treatment He had Himself received displayed man's hate of God, and, as He saw it, horror took hold upon Him and His soul was heavy to think that He must bear such an evil and be numbered with such transgressors—to be wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities. But not the wounding nor the bruising distressed Him so much as the sin itself. That utterly overwhelmed His soul.

Then, too, no doubt, the penalty of sin began to be realized by Him in the Garden—first the sin which had put Him in the position of a suffering Substitute. Then the penalty which must be borne because He was in that position. I dread, to the last degree, that kind of theology which is so common, nowadays, which seeks to depreciate and diminish our estimate of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters, that was no trifling suffering which made recompense to the Justice of God for the sins of men! I am never afraid of exaggeration when I speak of what my Lord endured. All Hell was distilled into that cup of which our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, was made to drink! It was not eternal suffering, but since He was Divine He could, in a short time, offer unto God a vindication of His Justice which sinners in Hell could not have offered had they been left to suffer in their own persons forever.

The woe that broke over the Savior's spirit—the great and fathomless ocean of inexpressible anguish which dashed over the Savior's soul when He died—is so inconceivable that I must not venture far lest I be accused of a vain attempt to express the unutterable! But this I will say—the very spray from that great tempestuous deep—as it fell on Christ, baptized Him in a bloody sweat! He had not yet come to the raging billows of the penalty itself, but even standing on the shore, as He heard the awful surf breaking at His feet, His soul was sorely amazed and very heavy. It was the shadow of the coming tempest. It was the prelude of the dread desertion which He had to

endure when He stood where we ought to have stood and paid to His Father's justice the debt which was due from us! It was this which laid Him low. To be treated as a sinner, to be smitten as a sinner, though in Him was no sin—this it was which caused Him the agony of which our text speaks.

Having thus spoken of the cause of His peculiar grief, I think we shall be able to support our view of the matter while we lead you to consider WHAT WAS THE CHARACTER OF THE GRIEF ITSELF? I shall trouble you, as little as possible, with the Greek words used by the Evangelists. I have studied each of them, to try and find out the shades of their meaning, but it will suffice if I give you the results of my careful investigation. What was the grief itself? How was it described? This great sorrow assailed our Lord some four days before He suffered. If you turn to John 12:27, you find that remarkable utterance, "Now is My soul troubled." We never knew Him say that before! This was a foretaste of the great depression of spirit which was so soon to lay Him prostrate in Gethsemane.

"Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this cause came I unto this hour." After that we read of Him in Matthew 26:37, that, "He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed." The depression had come over Him again. It was not pain. It was not a palpitation of the heart, or an aching of the brow. It was worse than these. Trouble of spirit is worse than pain of body—pain may bring trouble and be the incidental cause of sorrow—but if the mind is perfectly at peace, how well a man can bear pain! And when the soul is exhilarated and lifted up with inward joy, bodily pain is almost forgotten, the soul conquering the body. On the other hand the soul's sorrow will create bodily pain, the lower nature sympathizing with the higher.

Our Lord's main suffering lay in His soul—His soul-suffering was the soul of His suffering. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Pain of spirit is the worst of pain. Sorrow of heart is the climax of griefs. Let those who have ever known sinking spirits, despondency and mental gloom, attest the truth of what I say! This sorrow of heart appears to have led to a very deep depression of our Lord's spirit. In Matthew 26:37, you find it recorded that He was "deeply distressed," and that expression is full of meaning—of more meaning, indeed, than it would be easy to explain. The word, in the original, is a very difficult one to translate. It may signify the abstraction of the mind and its complete occupation, by sorrow, to the exclusion of every thought which might have alleviated the distress.

One burning thought consumed His whole soul and burned up all that might have yielded comfort. For a while His mind refused to dwell upon the result of His death, the consequent joy which was set before Him. His position as a Sin Bearer and the desertion by His Father which was necessary, engrossed His contemplation and hurried His soul away from all else. Some have seen in the word a measure of distraction—and though I will not go far in that direction—yet it does seem as if our Savior's mind underwent perturbations and convulsions widely different from His usual calm, collected spirit. He was tossed to and fro as upon a mighty sea of trouble, which was worked to a tempest, and carried Him away in its fury. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." As the Psalmist said, innumerable evils compassed Him about so that His heart failed Him. His heart was melted with sheer dismay. He was "deeply distressed."

Some consider the word to signify at its root, "separated from the people," as if He had become unlike other men, even as one whose mind is staggered by a sudden blow or pressed with some astounding calamity, is no more as ordinary men are. Mere onlookers would have thought our Lord to be a man distraught, burdened beyond the possibility of men, and borne down by a sorrow unparalleled among men. The learned Thomas Goodwin says, "The word denotes a failing, deficiency and sinking of spirit such as happens to men in sickness and wounding." Epaphroditus' sickness, whereby he was brought near to death, is called by the same word, so that we see that Christ's soul was sick and faint—was not His sweat produced by exhaustion? The cold, clammy sweat of dying men comes through faintness of body. But the bloody sweat of Jesus came from an utter faintness and prostration of soul. He was in an awful soul-swoon and suffered an inward death whose accompaniment was not watery tears from the eyes, but a weeping of blood from the entire man.

Many of you, however, know in your measure what it is to be deeply distressed without my multiplying words. And if you do not know, by personal experience, all explanations I could give would be in vain. When deep despondency comes on. When you forget everything that would sustain you and your spirit sinks down, down, down—then can you sympathize with our Lord. Others think you foolish, call you nervous and bid you rally yourself, but they know not your case. If they understood it, they would not mock you with such admonitions. Our Lord was "deeply distressed," very sinking, very despondent, overwhelmed with grief.

Mark tells us, next, in his 14th chapter and 33rd verse that our Lord was "sore amazed." The Greek word does not merely import that He was astonished and surprised, but that His amazement went to an extremity of horror, such as men fall into when their hair stands on end and their flesh trembles. As the delivery of the Law made Moses exceedingly fear and quake, and as David said, "My flesh trembles because of Your judgments," so our Lord was stricken with horror at the sight of the sin which was laid upon Him and the vengeance which was due on account of it. The Savior was first "distressed," then depressed, "heavy," and lastly, sore amazed and filled with amazement—for even He, as a Man, could scarcely have known what it was that He had undertaken to bear.

He had looked at it calmly and quietly and felt that whatever it was He would bear it for our sake. But when it actually came to the bearing of sin He was utterly astonished and taken aback at the dreadful position of standing in the sinner's place before God—of having His holy Father look upon Him as the sinner's Representative, and of being forsaken by that Father with whom He had lived on terms of amity and delight from old eternity. It staggered His holy, tender, loving Nature—and He was "sore amazed" and was "very heavy." We are further taught that there surrounded, encompassed and overwhelmed Him an ocean of sorrow, for the 38th verse of the 26th of Matthew contains the word perilupos, which signifies an encompassing around with sorrows.

In all ordinary miseries there is, generally, some loophole of escape, some breathing place for hope. We can generally remind our friends in trouble that their case might be worse. But in our Lord's griefs, worse could not be imagined, for He could say with David, "The pains of Hell get hold upon Me." All God's waves and billows went over Him. Above Him, beneath and around Him, outside Him, and within—all—all was anguish and neither was there one alleviation or source of consolation. His disciples could not help Him—they were all, but one, sleeping—and he who was

awake was on the road to betray Him. His spirit cried out in the Presence of the Almighty God beneath the crushing burden and unbearable load of His miseries! No griefs could have gone further than Christ's and He, Himself, said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful," or surrounded with sorrow "even unto death."

He did not die in the Garden, but He suffered as much as if He had died. He endured death intensively, though not extensively. It did not extend to the making His body a corpse, but it went as far in pain as if it had been so. His pangs and anguish went up to the mortal agony and only paused on the verge of death. Luke, to crown all, tells us in our text, that our Lord was in an agony. The expression, "agony," signifies a conflict, a contest, a wrestling. With whom was the agony? With whom did He wrestle? I believe it was with Himself. The contest here intended was not with His God—no—"not as I will but as You will," does not look like wrestling with God. It was not a contest with Satan, for, as we have already seen, He would not have been so sorely amazed had that been the conflict. It was a terrible combat within Himself, an agony within His own soul.

Remember that He could have escaped from all this grief with one resolve of His will and, naturally, the Manhood in Him said, "Do not bear it!" And the purity of His heart said, "Oh, do not bear it, do not stand in the place of the sinner." The delicate sensitiveness of His mysterious Nature shrunk altogether from any form of connection with sin—yet infinite Love said, "Bear it, stoop beneath the load." And so there was agony between the attributes of His Nature—a battle on an awful scale in the arena of His soul. The purity which cannot bear to come into contact with sin must have been very mighty in Christ—while the love which would not let His people perish was very mighty, too. It was a struggle on a titanic scale, as if a Hercules had met another Hercules—two tremendous forces strove and fought and agonized within the bleeding heart of Jesus.

Nothing causes a man more torture than to be dragged here and there with contending emotions. As civil war is the worst and most cruel kind of war, so a war within a man's soul, when two great passions in him struggle for the mastery, and both noble passions, too, causes a trouble and distress which none but he that feels it can understand. I marvel not that our Lord's sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, when such an inward pressure made Him like a cluster trod in the winepress! I hope I have not presumptuously looked into the Ark, or gazed within the veiled Holy of Holies. God forbid that curiosity or pride should urge me to intrude where the Lord has set a barrier. I have brought you as far as I can and must again drop the curtain with the words I used just now—

"'Tis to God, and God alone, That His griefs are fully known."

Our third question shall be, WHAT WAS OUR LORD'S SOLACE IN ALL THIS? He sought help in human companionship and it was very natural that He should do so. God has created in our human nature a craving for sympathy. We do not err when we expect our Brethren to watch with us in our hour of trial. But our Lord did not find that men were able to assist Him—however willing their spirit might be, their flesh was weak. What, then, did He do? He resorted to prayer and especially prayer to God under the Character of Father. I have learned by experience that we never know the sweetness of the Fatherhood of God so much as when we are in very bitter anguish. I can understand why the Savior said, "Abba, Father"—it was anguish that brought Him down as a chastened child to appeal plaintively to a Father's love.

In the bitterness of my soul I have cried, "If, indeed, You are my Father, by the heart of Your Fatherhood have pity on Your child." And here Jesus pleads with His Father as we have done. And He finds comfort in that pleading. Prayer was the channel of the Redeemer's comfort—earnest, intense, reverent, repeated prayer—and after each time of prayer He seems to have grown quiet and to have gone to His disciples with a measure of restored peace of mind. The sight of their sleeping helped to bring back His griefs and, therefore, He returned to pray again. And each time He was comforted, so that when He had prayed for the third time, He was prepared to meet Judas and the soldiers and to go with silent patience to judgment and to death. His great comfort was prayer and submission to the Divine will, for when He had laid His own will down at His Father's feet, the feebleness of His flesh spoke no more complainingly—but in sweet silence, like a sheep dumb before her shearers—He contained His soul in patience and rest.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, if any of you shall have your Gethsemane and your heavy griefs, imitate your Master by resorting to prayer, by crying to your Father and by learning submission to His will. I shall conclude by drawing two or three inferences from the whole subject. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

The first is this—Learn, dear Brothers and Sisters, the real Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not think of Him merely as God, though He is assuredly Divine, but feel Him to be near of kin to you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. How thoroughly can He sympathize with you! He has been burdened with all your burdens and grieved with all your griefs. Are the waters very deep through which you are passing? They are not deep compared with the torrents with which He was buffeted! Never a pang penetrates your spirit to which your Covenant Head was a stranger. Jesus can sympathize with you in all your sorrows, for He has suffered far more than you have ever suffered! He is able, therefore, to succor you in your temptations. Lay hold on Jesus as your familiar Friend, your Brother born for adversity, and you will have obtained a consolation which will bear you through the uttermost deeps.

Next, see here the intolerable evil of sin. You are a sinner, which Jesus never was—yet even to stand in the sinner's place was so dreadful to Him that He was sorrowful even unto death, What will sin one day be to you if you should be found guilty at the last? Oh, could we understand the horror of sin, there is not one among us that would be satisfied to reMal. in sin for a single moment! I believe there would go up from this House of Prayer this morning a weeping and a wailing such as might be heard in the very streets, if men and women here who are living in sin could really know what sin is, and what the wrath of God is that rests upon them— and what the judgments of God will be that will shortly surround them and destroy them!

Oh Soul, sin must be an awful thing if it so crushed our Lord! If the very imputation of it fetched bloody sweat from the pure and holy Savior, what must sin, itself, be? Avoid it, pass not by it, turn away from the very appearance of it, walk humbly and carefully with your God that sin may not harm you, for it is an exceeding plague, an infinite pest!

Learn next, but oh, how few minutes have I in which to speak of such a lesson, the matchless love of Jesus, that for your sakes and mine He would not merely suffer in body, but consented even to bear the horror of being accounted a sinner! Coming under the wrath of God because of our sins—though it cost Him suffering unto death and sore amazement—yet rather than that we should perish, the Lord stood as our Surety! Can we not cheerfully endure persecution for His

sake? Can we not labor earnestly for Him? Are we so ungenerous that His cause shall suffer lack while we have the means of helping it? Are we so base that His work shall flag while we have strength to carry it on? I charge you by Gethsemane, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have a part and lot in the passion of your Savior, love Him much who loved you so immeasurably! Spend and be spent for Him!

Again, looking at Jesus in the Garden, we learn the excellence and completeness of the Atonement. How black I am, how filthy, how loathsome in the sight of God—I feel myself only fit to be cast into the lowest Hell and I wonder that God has not long ago cast me there! But I go into Gethsemane, I peer under those gnarled olive trees and I see my Savior! Yes, I see Him wallowing on the ground in anguish and hear such groans come from Him as never came from human lips before! I look upon the earth and see it red with His blood, while His face is smeared with gory sweat. And I say to myself, "My God, my Savior, what ails You?"

I hear Him reply, "I am suffering for your sins." And then I take comfort, for while I gladly would have spared my Lord such an anguish, now that the anguish is over I can understand how Jehovah can spare me, because He smote His Son in my place! Now I have hope of justification, for I bring before the justice of God and my own conscience the remembrance of my bleeding Savior, and I say, "Can You twice demand payment, first at the hand of Your agonizing Son and then, again, at mine? Sinner as I am, I stand before the burning Throne of the severity of God and am not afraid of it! Can You scorch me, O consuming Fire, when You have not only scorched but utterly consumed my Substitute?"

No, by faith my soul sees Justice satisfied, the Law honored, the moral government of God established and yet my once guilty soul absolved and set free! The fire of avenging Justice has spent itself and the Law has exhausted its most rigorous demands upon the Person of Him who was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him! Oh the sweetness of the comfort which flows from the atoning blood! Obtain that comfort, my Brethren, and never leave it! Cling to your Lord's bleeding heart and drink in abundant consolation!

Last of all, what must be the terror of the punishment which will fall upon those men who reject the atoning blood and who will have to stand before God in their own proper persons to suffer for their sins? I will tell you, Sirs, with pain in my heart as I tell you, what will happen to those of you who reject my Lord! Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master, is a sign and prophecy to you of what will happen to you. Not in a garden, but on that bed of yours where you have so often been refreshed—you will be surprised and overtaken—and the pains of death will get hold upon you. With an exceedingly sorrow and remorse for your misspent life and for a rejected Savior you will be made very miserable. Then will your darling sin, your favorite lust, like another Judas, betray you with a kiss! While yet your soul lingers on your lips you will be seized and taken off by a body of evil ones and carried away to the bar of God, just as Jesus was taken to the judgment seat of Caiaphas.

There shall be a speedy, personal, and somewhat private judgment by which you shall be committed to prison where, in darkness, weeping and wailing, you shall spend the night before the great assize of the Judgment Morning. Then shall the day break and the resurrection morning come, and as our Lord then appeared before Pilate, so will you appear before the highest tribunal, not that of Pilate, but the dread judgment seat of the Son of God whom you have despised and

rejected! Then will witnesses come against you, not false witnesses, but true—and you will stand speechless, even as Jesus said not a word before His accusers. Then will Conscience and Despair buffet you! You will become such a monument of misery, such a spectacle of contempt as to be fitly noted by another Ecce Homo, and men shall look at you and say, "Behold the man and the suffering which has come upon him, because he despised his God and found pleasure in sin."

Then you shall be condemned. "Depart, you cursed," shall be your sentence, even as, "Let Him be crucified" was the doom of Jesus. You shall be taken away by the officers of Justice to your doom. Then, like the sinner's Substitute, you will cry, "I thirst," but not a drop of water shall be given you! You shall taste nothing but the gall of bitterness. You shall be executed publicly with your crimes written over your head that all may read and understand that you are justly condemned. And then will you be mocked as Jesus was, especially if you have been a professor of religion and a false one! All that pass by will say, "He saved others, he preached to others, but himself he cannot save." God Himself will mock you! No, think not that I dream! Has He not said it—"I, also, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes"? Cry unto your gods that you once trusted in! Get comfort out of the lusts you once delighted in, O you that are cast away forever! To your shame and to the confusion of your nakedness, you shall, that have despised the Savior, be made a spectacle of the justice of God forever.

It is right it should be so. Justice rightly demands it. Sin made the Savior suffer an agony—shall it not make you suffer? Moreover, in addition to your sin, you have rejected the Savior. You have said, "He shall not be my trust and confidence." Voluntarily, presumptuously and against your own conscience you have refused eternal life! And if you die rejecting mercy what can come of it but that first, your sin, and secondly, your unbelief shall condemn you to misery without limit or end? Let Gethsemane warn you! Let its groans, tears and bloody sweat admonish you! Repent of sin and believe in Jesus! May His Spirit enable you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Mark 14:32-42, and Psalms 40:1-17.

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Luke 22,44 #493 - Gethsemane

GETHSEMANE

NO. 493

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

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it

were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Luke 22:44.

FEW had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane. The majority of the disciples were not there. They were not sufficiently advanced in Divine Grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of "the agony." Occupied with the Passover feast at their own houses, they represent the many who live upon the letter, but are mere babes and sucklings as to the spirit of the Gospel. The walls of Gethsemane fitly typify that weakness in Grace which effectually shuts in the deeper marvels of communion from the gaze of ordinary Believers. To twelve, no, to eleven, only was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane, and see this great sight.

Out of the eleven, eight were left at some distance. They had fellowship, but not of that intimate sort to which the men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favored ones, who had been with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and had witnessed the life-giving miracle in the house of Jairus—only these three could approach the veil of His mysterious sorrow—within that veil even these must not intrude. A stone's throw distance must be left between. He must tread the winepress alone, and of the people there must be none with Him.

Peter and the two sons of Zebedee represent the few eminent, experienced, Grace-taught saints who may be written down as "Fathers." These having done business on great waters, can in some degree, measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer's passion. Having been much alone with Him, they can read His heart far better than those who merely see Him amid the crowd. To some selected spirits it is given, for the good of others, and to strengthen them for some future, special and tremendous conflict—to enter the inner circle—and hear the pleadings of the suffering High Priest. They have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and are made conformable unto His death.

Yet, I say, even these, the elect out of the elect—these choice and peculiar favorites among the kings courtiers—even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Savior's woe, so as to comprehend all His agonies. "Your unknown sufferings," is the remarkable expression of the Greek liturgy—for there is an inner chamber in His grief, shut out from human knowledge and

fellowship. Was it not here that Christ was more than ever an, "unspeakable gift" to us? Is not Watts right when he sings—

"And all the unknown joys He gives, Were bought with agonies unknown"? Since it would not be possible for any Believer, however experienced, to know for himself all that our Lord endured in the place of the olive press, when He was crushed beneath the upper and the nether millstone of mental suffering and hellish malice, it is clearly far beyond the preacher's capacity to set it forth to you. Jesus Himself must give you access to the wonders of Gethsemane—as for me, I can but invite you to enter the garden, bidding you take your shoes off, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. I am neither Peter, nor James, nor John, but one who would wish, like they, to drink of the Master's cup and be baptized with His Baptism.

I have up to now advanced only so far as yonder band of eight, but there I have listened to the deep groanings of the Man of Sorrows. Some of you, my venerable Friends, may have learned far more than I. But you will not refuse to hear again the roaring of the many waters which strive to quench the love of the Great Husband of our souls. Several matters will require our brief consideration. Come Holy Spirit, breathe light into our thoughts, life into our words.

I. Come here and behold the SAVIOR'S UNUTTERABLE WOE. The emotions of that dolorous night are expressed by several words in Scripture. John describes Him as saying four days before His passion, "Now is My soul troubled." As He marked the gathering clouds He hardly knew where to turn Himself, and cried out, "What shall I say?" Matthew writes of Him, "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Upon the word ademonein translated "very heavy," Goodwin remarks that there was a distraction in the Savior's agony since the root of the word signifies, "separated from the people—men in distraction, being separated from mankind."

What a thought, my Brothers and Sisters, that our blessed Lord should be driven to the very verge of distraction by the intensity of His anguish. Matthew represents the Savior Himself as saying, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." Here the word perilupos means encompassed, encircled, overwhelmed with grief. "He was plunged head and ears in sorrow, and had no breathing hole," is the strong expression of Goodwin. Sin leaves no cranny for comfort to enter, and therefore the Sin Bearer must be entirely immersed in woe. Clark records that He began to be sorely amazed and to be very heavy in this case thambeisthai, with the prefix ek, shows extremity of amazement like that of Moses when he did exceedingly fear and quake.

O blessed Savior, how can we bear to think of You as a Man astonished and alarmed! Yet was it even so when the terrors of God set themselves in array against You. Luke uses the strong language of my text— "being in an agony." These expressions, each of them worthy to be the theme of a discourse, are quite sufficient to show that the grief of the Savior was of the most extraordinary character—well justifying the prophetic exclamation, "Behold, and see if there are any sorrows like unto My sorrow which was done unto Me." He stands before us peerless in misery. None are molested by the powers of evil as He was—as if the powers of Hell had given commandment to their legions, "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the King, Himself."

Should we profess to understand all the sources of our Lord's agony, wisdom would rebuke us with the question, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths?" We cannot do more than look at the revealed causes of grief. It partly arose from the

horror of His soul when fully comprehending the meaning of sin. Brethren, when you were first convicted of sin, and saw it as a thing exceedingly sinful, though your perception of its sinfulness was but faint compared with its real heinousness, yet horror took hold upon you.

Do you remember those sleepless nights? Like the Psalmist, you said, "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Some of us can remember when our souls chose strangling rather than life—when if the shadows of death could have covered us from the wrath of God, we would have been too glad to sleep in the grave that we might not make our bed in Hell. Our blessed Lord saw sin in its natural blackness. He had a most distinct perception of its treasonable assault upon His God, its murderous hatred to Himself and its destructive influence upon mankind. Well might horror take hold upon Him, for a sight of sin must be far more hideous than a sight of Hell, which is but its offspring.

Another deep fountain of grief was found in the fact that Christ now assumed more fully His official position with regard to sin. He was now made sin. Hear the word! He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him! In that night the words of Isaiah were fulfilled—"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Now He stood as the Sin Bearer, the Substitute accepted by Divine justice to bear—that we might never bear—the whole of Divine wrath.

At that hour Heaven looked on Him as standing in the sinner's place, and treated as sinful man had richly deserved to be treated. Oh, dear Friends, when the immaculate Lamb of God found Himself in the place of the guilty, when He could not repudiate that place because He had voluntarily accepted it in order to save His chosen, what must His soul have felt? How must His perfect Nature have been shocked at such close association with iniquity!

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

But possibly a yet more fruitful tree of bitterness was this—that now His Father began to withdraw His Presence from Him. The shadow of that great eclipse began to fall upon His spirit when He knelt in that cold midnight amidst the olives of Gethsemane. The sensible comforts which had cheered His spirit were taken away. That blessed application of promises which Christ Jesus needed as a man was removed. All that we understand by the term, "consolations of God," were hidden from His eyes. He was left single-handed in His weakness to contend for the deliverance of man. The Lord stood by as if He were an indifferent spectator, or rather, as if He were an adversary—He wounded Him—"with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel

one."

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

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

We do but run with footmen—He had to contend with horsemen. We do but wade up to our ankles in shallow streams of sorrow—He had to buffet with the swellings of Jordan. He will never fail to succor His people when tempted. Even as it was said of old, "In all their affliction He was afflicted. And the Angel of His Presence saved them."

II. We turn next to contemplate THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD. At the outset of His career, the serpent began to nibble at the heel of the promised Deliverer. And now as the time approached when the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, that old dragon made a desperate attempt upon his great Destroyer. It is not possible for us to lift the veil where Revelation has permitted it to fall, but we can form some faint idea of the suggestions with which Satan tempted our Lord.

Let us, however, remark by way of caution, before we attempt to paint this picture, that whatever Satan may have suggested to our Lord, His perfect Nature did not in any degree whatever submit to it so as to sin. The temptations were, doubtless, of the very foulest character, but they left no speck or flaw upon Him, who remained still the fairest among ten thousand. The prince of this world came, but he had nothing in Christ. He struck the sparks, but they did not fall, as in our case, upon dry tinder. They fell as into the sea and were quenched at once. He hurled the fiery arrows, but they could not even scar the flesh of Christ. They smote upon the buckler of His perfectly righteous Nature and they fell off with their points broken, to the discomfiture of the adversary.

But what do you think were these temptations? It strikes me, from some hints given, that they were somewhat as follows—there was, first, a temptation to leave the work unfinished. We may gather this from the prayer—"If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." "Son of God," Satan said, "is it so? Are You really called to bear the sin of man? Has God said, 'I have laid help upon One that is mighty,' and are You He, the chosen of God, to bear all this load? Look at Your weakness! You sweat, even now, great drops of blood! Surely You are not He whom the Father has ordained to be mighty to save—or if You are—what will You win by it?

"What will it avail You? You have glory enough already. See what miscreants they are for whom You are to offer up Yourself a Sacrifice? Your best friends are asleep about You when most You need their comfort. Your treasurer, Judas, is hastening to betray You for the price of a common

slave. The world for which You sacrifice Yourself will cast out Your name as evil and Your Church, for which You do pay the ransom price, what is it worth? A company of mortals! Your Divinity could create the like any moment it pleases You! Why do You need, then, to pour out Your soul unto death?"

Such arguments would Satan use. The hellish craft of one who had then been thousands of years tempting men, would know how to invent all manner of mischief. He would pour the hottest coals of Hell upon the Savior. It was in struggling with this temptation, among others, that, being in an agony, our Savior prayed more earnestly.

Scripture implies that our Lord was assailed by the fear that His strength would not be sufficient. "He was heard in that He feared." How, then, was He heard? An angel was sent unto Him strengthening Him. His fear, then, was probably produced by a sense of weakness. I imagine that the foul Fiend would whisper in His ear—"You! You endure to be smitten of God and abhorred of men! Reproach has broken Your heart already— how will You bear to be publicly put to shame and driven without the city as an unclean thing? How will You bear to see Your weeping kinsfolk, and Your broken-hearted mother standing at the foot of Your Cross? Your tender and sensitive spirit will quail under it.

"As for Your Body, it is already emaciated. Your long fasts have brought You very low. You will become a prey to death long before Your work is done. You will surely fail. God has forsaken You. Now will they persecute and take You. They will give up Your soul to the lion, and Your darling to the power of the dog." Then would he picture all the sufferings of crucifixion and say, "Can Your heart endure, or can Your hands be strong in the day when the Lord shall deal with You?" The temptation of Satan was not directed against the Godhead, but the Manhood of Christ, and therefore the fiend would probably dwell upon the feebleness of man. "Did You not say Yourself, 'I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the despised of the people? How will You bear it when the wrath-clouds of God gather about You? The tempest will surely shipwreck all Your hopes. It cannot be! You cannot drink of this cup, nor be baptized with this Baptism." In this manner, we think, was our Master tried. But see, He yields not to it. Being in an agony, which word means in a wrestling ring, He struggles with the tempter like Jacob with the angel. "No," says He, "I will not be subdued by taunts of My weakness. I am strong in the strength of My Godhead, I will overcome you yet." Yet was the temptation so awful, that, in order to master it, His mental depression caused Him to, "sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Possibly, also, the temptation may have arisen from a suggestion that He was utterly forsaken. I do not know—there may be sterner trials than this, but surely this is one of the worst, to be utterly forsaken. "See," said Satan, as he hissed it out between his teeth—"see, You have a friend nowhere! Look up to Heaven, Your Father has shut up the heart of His compassion against You. Not an angel in Your Father's courts will stretch out his hand to help You. Look yonder, not one of those spirits, who honored Your birth, will interfere to protect Your life. All Heaven is false to You. You are left alone. And as for earth, do not all men thirst for Your blood?

"Will not the Jew be gratified to see Your flesh torn with nails? And will not the Roman gloat himself when You, the King of the Jews, are fastened to the Cross? You have no friend among the nations. The high and mighty scoff at You, and the poor thrust out their tongues in derision. You had no where to lay Your head when You were in Your best estate. You have no place, now,

where shelter will be given You. See the companions with whom You have taken sweet counsel, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there Your brother James, see there Your beloved disciple John, and your bold Apostle Peter?—They sleep, they sleep!

"And yonder eight, how the cowards sleep when You are in Your sufferings! And where are the four hundred others? They have forgotten You. They will be at their farms and their merchandize by morning. Lo! You have no friend left in Heaven or earth. All Hell is against You. I have stirred up my infernal den. I have sent my missives throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon You this night, and we will spare no arrows! We will use all our infernal might to overwhelm You. And what will You do, You solitary One?"

It may be this was the temptation. I think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto Him, strengthening Him, removed that fear. "He was heard in that He feared." He was no more alone, but Heaven was with Him. It may be that this is the reason of His coming three times to His disciples—as Hart puts it—

"Backwards and forwards thrice He ran As if He sought some help from man."

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

We think Satan also assaulted our Lord with a bitter taunt, indeed. You know in what guise the tempter can dress it, and how bitterly sarcastic he can make the insinuation—"Ah, You will not be able to achieve the redemption of Your people. Your grand benevolence will prove a mockery, and Your beloved ones will perish. You shall not prevail to save them from my grasp. Your scattered sheep shall surely be my prey. Son of David, I am a match for You! You cannot deliver out of my hand. Many of Your chosen have entered Heaven on the strength of Your atonement, but I will drag them from there and quench the stars of glory!

"I will thin the courts of Heaven of the choristers of God, for You will not fulfill Your Suretyship. You cannot do it. You are not able to bring up all this great people—they will perish yet. See, are not the sheep scattered now that the Shepherd is smitten? They will all forget You. You will never see of the travail of Your soul. Your desired end will never be reached. You will be forever the man that began to build but was not able to finish." Perhaps this is more truly the reason why Christ went three times to look at His disciples.

You have seen a mother. She is very faint, weary with a heavy sickness, but she labors under a sore dread that her child will die. She has started from her couch, upon which disease had thrown her, to snatch a moment's rest. She gazes anxiously upon her child. She marks the faintest sign of recovery. But she is so sick herself she cannot remain more than an instant from her own bed. She cannot sleep, she tosses painfully, for her thoughts wander. She rises to gaze again—"How are you, my Child, how are you? Are those palpitations of your heart less violent? Is your pulse more gentle?" But, alas, she is faint, and she must go to her bed again, yet she can get no rest. She will return again and again to watch the loved one.

So, methinks, Christ looked upon Peter and James and John, as much as to say, "No, they are not all lost yet. There are three left," and, looking upon them as the type of all the Church, He seemed

to say—"No, no. I will overcome. I will get the mastery. I will struggle even unto blood. I will pay the ransom price, and deliver My Darlings from their foe."

Now these, methinks, were His temptations. If you can form a fuller idea of what they were than this, then right happy shall I be. With this one lesson I leave the point—"Pray that you enter not into temptation." This is Christ's own expression—His own deduction from His trial. You have all read, dear Friends, John Bunyan's picture of Christian fighting with Apollyon. That master painter has sketched it to the very life. He says, though, "this sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent. I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword. Then indeed, he did smile and look upward! But it was the most dreadful sight I ever saw."

That is the meaning of that prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." Oh you that go recklessly where you are tempted, you that pray for afflictions—and I have known some silly enough to do that! You that put yourselves where you tempt the devil to tempt you, take heed from the Master's own example. He sweat great drops of blood when He was tempted. Oh, pray God to spare you such trial! Pray this morning, and every day, "Lead me not into temptation."

III. Behold, dear Brothers and Sisters, THE BLOODY SWEAT. We read, that, "He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood." For this reason, a few writers have supposed that the sweat was not actually blood, but had the appearance of it. That interpretation, however, has been rejected by most commentators, from Augustine downward, and it is generally held that the words, "as it were," do not only set forth likeness to blood, but signify that it was actually and literally blood. We find the same idiom used in the text—"We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."

Now, clearly, this does not mean that Christ was like the only-begotten of the Father, since He is really so. So that generally this expression of Holy Scripture sets forth, not a mere likeness to a thing, but the very thing itself. We believe, then, that Christ did really sweat blood. This phenomenon, though somewhat unusual, has been witnessed in other persons. There are several cases on record, some in the old medicine books of Galen, and others of more recent date, of persons who after long weakness, under fear of death, have sweat blood.

But this case is altogether one by itself for several reasons. If you will notice, He not only sweat blood, but it was in great drops. The blood coagulated and formed large masses. I cannot better express what is meant than by the word, "clots"—big, heavy drops. This has not been seen in many cases. Some slight effusions of blood have been known in cases of persons who were previously enfeebled, but great drops, never. When it is said, "falling to the ground"—it shows their copiousness, so that they not only stood upon the surface and were sucked up by His garments till He became like the red heifer which was slaughtered on that very spot, but the drops fell to the ground.

Here He stands unrivalled. He was a man in good health, only about thirty years of age, and was laboring under no fear of death, but the mental pressure arising from His struggle with temptation. And the straining of all His strength, in order to baffle the temptation of Satan, so forced His frame to an unnatural excitement, that His pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell to the ground. This proves how tremendous must have been the weight of sin when it was able so to crush the

Savior that He distilled drops of blood!

This proves too, my Brothers and Sisters, the mighty power of His love. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the Cross. But see, it gives forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, since, without a lance, the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife—it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry, "Spring up, O well." Of itself it flows in crimson torrents. Dearly beloved Friends, if men suffer some frightful pain of mind—I am not acquainted with the medical matter—apparently the blood rushes to the heart. The cheeks are pale, a fainting fit comes on. The blood has gone inward, as if to nourish the inner man while passing through its trial. But look at our Savior in His agony—He is so utterly oblivious of Self, that instead of His agony driving His blood to the heart to nourish Himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth. The agony of Christ, inasmuch as it pours Him out upon the ground, pictures the fullness of the offering which He made for men.

Do you not perceive, my Brothers and Sisters, how intense must have been the wrestling through which He passed and will you not hear His voice to you?—"You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." It has been the lot of some of us to have sore temptations—else we did not know how to teach others—so sore that in wrestling against them, the cold, clammy sweat has stood upon our brow. The place will never be forgotten by me—a lonely spot—where, musing upon my God, an awful rush of blasphemy went over my soul, till I would have preferred death to the trial.

I fell on my knees then and there, for the agony was awful, while my hand was at my mouth to keep the blasphemies from being spoken. Once let Satan be permitted really to try you with a temptation to blasphemy, and you will never forget it, though you live till your hairs are blanched. Or let him attack you with some lust, and though you hate and loathe the very thought of it, and would lose your right arm sooner than indulge in it, yet it will come and hunt and persecute and torment you. Wrestle against it even unto sweat, my Brothers and Sisters, yes, even unto blood.

None of you should say, "I could not help it, I was tempted." Resist till you sweat blood rather than sin. Do not say, "I was so pressed with it. And it so suited my natural temperament, that I could not help falling into it." Look at the great Apostle and High Priest of your profession, and sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls. Pray that you enter not into temptation, so that when you enter into it you may with confidence say, "Lord, I did not seek this, therefore help me through with it, for Your name's sake."

IV. I want you, in the fourth place, to notice THE SAVIOR'S PRAYER. Dear Friends, when we are tempted and desire to overcome, the best weapon is prayer. When you cannot use the sword, and the shield, take to yourself the famous weapon of All-Prayer. So did your Savior. Let us notice His prayer. It was a lonely prayer. He withdrew even from His three best friends about a stone's throw. Believer, especially in temptation, be much in solitary prayer. As private prayer is the key to open Heaven, so is it the key to shut the gates of Hell. As it is a shield to prevent, so is it the sword with which to fight against temptation.

Family prayer, social prayer, prayer in the Church will not suffice. These are very precious, but the best beaten spice will smoke in your censer in your private devotions, where no ear hears but God. Betake yourselves to solitude, if you would overcome. Mark, too, it was humble prayer. Luke says He knelt, but another Evangelist says He fell on His face. What? Does the King fall on His face? Where, then, must be your place, you humble servant of the great Master? Does the Prince fall flat to the ground? Where, then, will you lie? What dust and ashes shall cover your head? What sackcloth shall gird your loins? Humility gives us good foothold in prayer. There is no hope of any real prevalence with God, who casts down the proud, unless we abase ourselves that He may exalt us in due time.

Further, it was filial prayer. Matthew describes Him as saying, "O My Father." Mark puts it, "Abba, Father." You will find this always a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. Hence that prayer, in which it is written, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," begins with, "Our Father which are in Heaven." Plead as a child. You have no rights as a subject. You have forfeited them by your treason, but nothing can forfeit a child's right to a father's protection. Be not, then, ashamed to say, "My Father, hear my cry." Again, observe that it was persevering prayer. He prayed three times, using the same words. Be not content until you prevail. Be as the importunate widow, whose continued coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Further, see how it glowed to a red-hot heat—it was earnest prayer. "He prayed more earnestly." What groans were those which were uttered by Christ! What tears, which welled up from the deep fountains of His Nature! Make earnest supplication if you would prevail against the adversary. And last, it was the prayer of resignation. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Yield and God yields. Let it be as God wills, and God will will it that it shall be for your best. Be perfectly content to leave the result of your prayer in His hands, who knows when to give, and how to give, and what to give, and what to withhold. So pleading earnestly, importunately, yet mingling with it humility and resignation, you shall prevail.

Dear Friends, we must conclude—turn to the last point with this as a practical lesson—"Rise and pray." When the disciples were lying down, they slept. Sitting was the posture that was congenial to sleep. Rise! Shake yourselves! Stand up in the name of God! Rise and pray. And if you are tempted, be more in prayer than ever you were in your life— instant, passionate, importunate with God that He would deliver you in the day of your conflict.

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

The cloud has passed away. Christ has knelt and the prayer is over. "But," says one, "did Christ prevail in prayer?" Beloved, could we have any hope that He would prevail in Heaven if He had not prevailed on earth? Should we not have had a suspicion that if His strong crying and tears had not been heard then, He would fail now? His prayers did speed, and therefore He is a good Intercessor for us. "How was He heard?" The answer shall be given very briefly, indeed.

He was heard, I think, in three respects. The first gracious answer that was given Him was, that His mind was suddenly rendered calm. What a difference there is between, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful"—His hurrying too and fro, His repetition of the prayer three times, the singular agitation that was upon Him—what a contrast between all these, and His going forth to meet the traitor with,

"Betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?" Like a troubled sea before, and now as calm as when He, Himself said, "Peace, be still," and the waves were quiet.

You cannot know a more profound peace than that which reigned in the Savior when before Pilate He answered Him not a word. He is calm to the last, as calm as though it were His day of triumph rather than His day of trouble. Now I think this was vouchsafed to Him in answer to His prayer. He had sufferings perhaps more intense, but His mind was now quieted so as to meet them with greater deliberation.

Like some men, who when they first hear the firing of the shots in a battle are all trepidation, but as the fight grows hotter, and they are in greater danger, they are cool and collected. They are wounded, they are bleeding, they are dying—yet are they quiet as a summer's eve. The first young flush of trouble is gone, and they can meet the foe with peace—so the Father heard the Savior's cry, and breathed such a profound peace into His soul, that it was like a river, and His righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Next, we believe that He was answered by God strengthening Him through an angel. How that was done we do not know. Probably it was by what the angel said, and equally likely is it that it was by what he did. The angel may have whispered the promises—pictured before His mind's eye the glory of His success—sketched His resurrection, portrayed the scene when His angels would bring His chariots from on High to bear Him to His Throne. The angel may have revived before Him the recollection of the time of His advent, the prospect when He should reign from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. And so have made him strong.

Or, perhaps, by some unknown method God sent such power to our Christ, who had been like Samson with his locks shorn, that He suddenly received all the might and majestic energy that were needed for the terrific struggle. Then He walked out of the garden no more a worm, and no man, but made strong with an invisible might that made Him a match for all the armies that were round about Him. A troop had overcome Him, like Gad of old, but He overcame at last. Now He can dash through a troop! Now He can leap over a wall. God has sent, by His angel, force from on high, and made the Man Christ strong for battle and for victory.

And I think we may conclude with saying that God heard Him in granting Him now, not simply strength, but a real victory over Satan. I do not know whether what Adam Clarke supposes is correct, that in the garden Christ did pay more of the price than He did even on the Cross. But I am quite convinced that they are very foolish who get to such refinement that they think the Atonement was made on the Cross and nowhere else at all. We believe that it was made in the garden as well as on the Cross. And it strikes me that in the garden one part of Christ's work was finished, wholly finished, and that was His conflict with Satan.

I conceive that Christ had now rather to bear the absence of His Father's Presence, and the reviling of the people, and the sons of men, than the temptations of the devil. I do think that these were over when He rose from His knees in prayer, when He lifted Himself from the ground where He marked His visage in the clay in drops of blood. The temptation of Satan was then over, and He might have said, concerning that part of the work—"It is finished, broken is the dragon's head—I have overcome him."

Perhaps in those few hours that Christ spent in the garden, the whole energy of the agents of iniquity was concentrated and dissipated. Perhaps in that one conflict, all that craft could invent, all that malice could devise, all that infernal practice could suggest, was tried on Christ—the devil having his chain loosened for that purpose, having Christ given up to him, as Job was, that he might touch Him in His bones and in His flesh. Yes, touch Him in His heart, and His soul—and vex Him in His spirit. It may be that every devil in Hell, and every Fiend of the pit was summoned, each to vent his own spite and to pour their united energy and malice upon the head of Christ.

And there He stood and He could have said, as He stood up to meet the next adversary—a devil in the form of man—Judas—"I come this day from Bozrah, with garments dyed red from Edom. I have trampled on My enemies and overcome them once and for all. Now I go to bear man's sin, and my Father's wrath, and to finish the work which He has given Me to do." If this is so, Christ was then heard, in that He feared—He feared the temptation of Satan—and He was delivered from it. He feared His own weakness, and He was strengthened. He feared His own trepidation of mind, and He was made calm.

What shall we say, then, in conclusion, but this lesson. Does it not say, "Whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall have"? Then if your temptations reach the most tremendous height and force, still lay hold of God in prayer, and you shall prevail. Convicted Sinner! That is a comfort for you. Troubled Saint! That is a joy for you. To one and all of us is this lesson of this morning—"Pray that you enter not into temptation." If in temptation let us ask that Christ may pray for us that our faith fail not. And when we have passed through the trouble, let us try to strengthen our Brothers and Sisters, even as Christ has, by His Grace, strengthened us this day. Amen.

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Luke 22,47-48 #494 - The Betrayal

THE BETRAYAL

NO. 494

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

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and he that

was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them

and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus

said unto him, Judas, betray you the

Son of Man with a kiss?"

Luke 22:47-48.

WHEN Satan had been entirely worsted in his conflict with Christ in the garden, the man-devil Judas came upon the scene. As the Parthian in his flight turns round to shoot the fatal arrow, so the archenemy aimed another shaft at the Redeemer by employing the traitor into whom he had entered. Judas became the devil's deputy, and a most trusty and serviceable tool he was. The Evil One had taken entire possession of the apostate's heart and, like the swine possessed of devils, he ran violently downwards towards destruction.

Well had infernal malice selected the Savior's trusted friend to be His treacherous betrayer, for thus he stabbed at the very center of His broken and bleeding heart. But, Beloved, as in all things, God is wiser than Satan, and the Lord of Goodness outwitted the Prince of Evil. In this dastardly betrayal of Christ, prophecy was fulfilled, and Christ was the more surely declared to be the promised Messiah. Was not Joseph a type? And, lo, like that envied youth, Jesus was sold by His own brothers and sisters.

Was He not to be another Samson, by whose strength the gates of Hell should be torn from their posts? Lo, as Samson, He is bound by His countrymen and delivered to the adversary. Know you not that He was the antitype of David? And was not David deserted by Ahithophel, his own familiar friend and counselor? Brothers and Sisters, do not the words of the Psalmist receive a literal fulfillment in our Master's betrayal? What prophecy can be more exactly true than the language of the forty-first and fifty-fifth Psalms?

In the first we read, "Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." And in the fifty-fifth the Psalmist is yet more clear. "For it was not an enemy that reproached me. Then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me. Then I would have hid myself from him: but it was you, a man my

equal, my guide and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the House of God in company.

"He has put forth his hands against such as are at peace with him: he has broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." Even an obscure passage in one of the lesser Prophets must have a literal fulfillment, and for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a base slave, must the Savior be betrayed by His choice friend. Ah, you foul Fiend, you shall find at the last, that your wisdom is but intensified folly!

As for the deep plots and plans of your craft, the Lord shall laugh them to scorn. After all, you are but the unconscious drudge of Him whom you abhor in all the black work you do so greedily, you are no better than a mean scullion in the royal kitchen of the King of kings.

Without further preface, let us advance to the subject of our Lord's betrayal. First, concentrate your thoughts upon Jesus, the Betrayed One. And when you have lingered awhile there, solemnly gaze into the villainous countenance of Judas, the betrayer—he may prove a beacon to warn us against the sin which genders apostasy.

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

It is appointed that He must die, but how shall He fall into the hands of His adversaries? Shall they capture Him in conflict? It must not be, lest He appear an unwilling victim. Shall He flee before His foes until He can hide no longer? It is not meet that a sacrifice should be hunted to death. Shall He offer Himself to the foe? That were to excuse His murderers, or be a party to their crime. Shall He be taken accidentally or unawares? That would withdraw from His cup the necessary bitterness which made it wormwood mingled with gall.

No—He must be betrayed by His friend, that He may bear the utmost depths of suffering, and that in every separate circumstance there may be a well of grief. One reason for the appointment of the betrayal lay in the fact that it was ordained that man's sin should reach its culminating point in His death. God, the great Owner of the vineyard, had sent many servants, and the farmers had stoned one, and cast out another. Last of all, He said, "I will send My Son. Surely they will reverence My Son."

When they slew the heir to win the inheritance, their rebellion had reached its height. The murder of our blessed Lord was the extreme of human guilt—it developed the deadly hatred against God which lurks in the heart of man. When man became a deicide, sin had reached its fullness. And in the black deed of the man by whom the Lord was betrayed, that fullness was all displayed. If it had not been for a Judas, we had not known how black, how foul our human nature may become. I scorn the men who try to apologize for the treachery of this devil in human form, this son of perdition, this foul apostate.

I should think myself a villain if I tried to screen him, and I shudder for the men who dare extenuate his crimes. My Brothers and Sisters, we should feel a deep detestation of this master of infamy. He has gone to his own place, and the anathema of David, part of which was quoted by Peter, has come upon him, "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin.

Let his days be few. And let another take his office." Surely, as the devil was allowed unusually to torment the bodies of men, even so was he let loose to get possession of Judas as he has seldom gained possession of any other man—that we might see how foul, how desperately evil is the human heart. Beyond a doubt, however, the main reason for this was that Christ might offer a perfect atonement for sin. We may usually read the sin in the punishment. Man betrayed his God. Man had the custody of the royal garden, and should have kept its green avenues sacred for communion with his God.

But he betrayed the trust. The sentinel was false. He admitted evil into his own heart, and so into the Paradise of God. He was false to the good name of the Creator, tolerating the insinuation which he should have repelled with scorn. Therefore must Jesus find man a traitor to Him. There must be the counterpart of the sin in the suffering which He endured. You and I have often betrayed Christ. We have, when tempted, chosen the evil and forsaken the good. We have taken the bribes of Hell, and have not followed closely with Jesus.

It seemed most fitting, then, that He who bore the chastisement of sin should be reminded of its ingratitude and treachery by the things which He suffered. Besides, Brothers and Sisters, that cup must be bitter to the last degree which is to be the equivalent for the wrath of God. There must be nothing consolatory in it. Pains must be taken to pour into it all that even Divine wisdom can invent of awful and unheard of woe, and this one point—"He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me," was absolutely necessary to intensify the bitterness.

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

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

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

that the Master took him to task as to the expenditure of his privy purse.

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

The twelve were part and parcel of Jesus of Nazareth. One old commentator says of Judas—"He was Christ's alter ego"—to the people at large there was an identification of each Apostle with the Leader of the band. And oh, when such associations have been established, and then there is treachery, it is as though our arm should commit treason against our head, or as if our foot should desert the body. This was a stab, indeed! Perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, our Lord saw in the person of Judas a representative man, the portraiture of the many thousands who in after ages imitated his crime.

Did Jesus see in Iscariot all the Judases who betray truth, virtue and the Cross? Did He perceive the multitudes of whom we may say that they were, spiritually, in the loins of Judas? Hymenaeus, Alexander, Hermogenes, Philetus, Demas, and others of that tribe, were all before Him as He saw the man—His equal, His acquaintance—bartering Him away for thirty pieces of silver.

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

"This was the most unkindest cut of all; For when the noble Caesar saw him stab, Ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms, Quite vanquished him. Then burst his mighty heart; And, in his mantle muffling up his face, Even at the base of Pompey's statue— Great Caesar fell."

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

Let us notice, dear Friends, while we look at the breaking heart of our agonizing Savior, the manner in which He met this affliction. He had been much in prayer—prayer had overcome His dreadful agitation—He was very calm. And we need to be very calm when we are forsaken by a friend. Observe His gentleness. The first words He spoke to Judas, when the traitor had polluted His cheek with a kiss, was this—"FRIEND"! FRIEND!! Note that! Not, "You hateful miscreant," but "Friend, why are you come?" not, "Wretch, why do you dare to stain My cheek with your foul and lying lips?" No, "Friend, why are you come?"

Ah, if there had been anything good left in Judas, this would have brought it out. If he had not been an unmitigated, incorrigible, thrice-dyed traitor, his avarice must have lost its power at that instant and he would have cried—"My Master! I came to betray You, but that generous word has won my soul. Here, if You must be bound, I will be bound with You. I make a full confession of my infamy!" Our Lord added these words—there is reproof in them, but notice how kind they are, still, how much too good for such a despicable coward—"Judas, betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?"

I can conceive that the tears gushed from His eyes, and that His voice faltered, when He thus addressed His own familiar friend and acquaintance—"Betray you," My Judas, My treasurer, "betray you the Son of Man," your suffering, sorrowing Friend, whom you have seen naked and poor, and without a place whereon to lay His head? Betray you the Son of Man— and do you prostitute the fondest of all endearing signs—a kiss—that which should be a symbol of loyalty to the King, shall it be the badge of your treachery—that which was reserved for affection as her best symbol—do you make it the instrument of My destruction? Betray you the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Oh, if he had not been given up to hardness of heart, if the Holy Spirit had not utterly left him, surely this son of perdition would have fallen prostrate, yet again, and weeping out his very soul, would have cried— "No, I cannot betray You, You suffering Son of Man! Forgive, forgive me! Spare Yourself, escape from this bloodthirsty crew and pardon Your treacherous disciple!" But no, no word of compunction, while the silver is at stake! Afterwards came the sorrow that works death, which drove him, like Ahithophel, his prototype, to court the gallows to escape remorse.

This, also, must have aggravated the woe of our beloved Lord, when He saw the final impenitence of the traitor, and read the tearful doom of that man of whom He had once said, it would be better for him that he had never been born.

Beloved, I would have you fix your eyes on your Lord in your quiet meditations as being thus despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And gird up the loins of your minds, counting it no strange thing if this fiery trial should come upon you. But be determined that though your Lord should be betrayed by His most eminent disciples, yet, through His Divine Grace you will cling to Him in shame, and in suffering, and will follow Him, if needs be, even unto death.

God give us Grace to see the vision of His nailed hands and feet! And remembering that all this came from the treachery of a friend, let us be very jealous of ourselves, lest we crucify the Lord afresh—and put Him to an open shame by betraying Him in our conduct, or in our words, or in our thoughts.

II. Grant me your attention while we make an estimate of the man by whom the Son of man was betrayed—JUDAS THE BETRAYER. I would call your attention, dear Friends, to his position and public character. Judas was a preacher—no, he was a foremost preacher. "He obtained part of this ministry," said the Apostle Peter. He was not simply one of the seventy. He had been selected by the Lord, Himself, as one of the Twelve, an honorable member of the college of the Apostles.

Doubtless he had preached the Gospel so that many had been gladdened by his voice and miraculous powers had been vouchsafed to him— so that at his word the sick had been healed, deaf ears had been opened, and the blind had been made to see. There is no doubt that he who could not keep the devil out of himself, had cast devils out of others. Yet how are you fallen from

Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! He that was as a Prophet in the midst of the people, and spoke with the tongue of the learned, whose word and wonders proved that he had been with Jesus, and had learned of Him—he betrays his Master.

Understand, my Brothers and Sisters, that no gifts can guarantee Divine Grace, and that no position of honor or usefulness in the Church will necessarily prove our being true to our Lord and Master. Doubtless there are bishops in Hell, and crowds of those who once occupied the pulpit are now condemned forever to bewail their hypocrisy. You that are Church officers, do not conclude that because you enjoy the confidence of the Church, that therefore, of an absolute certainty, the Grace of God is in you. Perhaps it is the most dangerous of all positions for a man to become well known and much respected by the religious world, and yet to be rotten at the core.

To be where others can observe our faults is a healthy thing, though painful. But to live with beloved friends who would not believe it possible for us to do wrong, and who, if they saw us err, would make excuses for us—this is to be where it is next to impossible for us ever to be aroused if our hearts are not right with God. To have a fair reputation and a false heart is to stand upon the brink of Hell.

Judas took a very high degree officially. He had the distinguished honor of being entrusted with the Master's financial concerns, and this, after all, was no small degree to which to attain. The Lord, who knows how to use all sorts of gifts, perceived what gift the man had. He knew that Peter's unthinking impetuosity would soon empty the bag, and leave the company in great straits. And if He had entrusted it to John, his loving spirit might have been cajoled into unwise benevolence towards beggars of unctuous tongue. John might even have spent the little moneys in buying alabaster boxes whose precious ointments should anoint the Master's head. He gave the bag to Judas, and it was discreetly, prudently and properly used. There is no doubt he was the most judicious person, and fitted to occupy the post.

But oh, dear Friends, if the Master shall choose any of us who are ministers or Church officers, and give us a very distinguished position. If our place in the ranks shall be that of commanding officers, so that even our Brother ministers look up with esteem, and our fellow elders or deacons regard us as being fathers in Israel—oh, if we turn, if we prove false—how damnable shall be our end at the last! What a blow shall we give to the heart of the Church, and what derision will be made in Hell!

You will observe that the character of Judas was openly an admirable one. I find not that he committed himself in any way. Not the slightest speck defiled his moral character so far as others could perceive. He was no boaster, like Peter. He was free enough from the rashness which cries, "Though all men should forsake You, yet will I not." He asks no place on the right hand of the Throne—his ambition is of another sort. He does not ask idle questions. The Judas who asks questions is, "not Iscariot." Thomas and Philip are often prying into deep matters, but not Judas.

He receives the Truth of God as it is taught him, and when others are offended, and walk no more with Jesus, he faithfully adheres to Him, having golden reasons for so doing. He does not indulge in the lusts of the flesh or in the pride of life. None of the disciples suspected him of hypocrisy. They said at the table, "Lord, is it I?" They never said, "Lord, is it Judas?" It was true he had been filching for months, but then he did it by small amounts, and covered his defalcations so well by

financial manipulations that he ran no risk of detection from the honest, unsuspecting fishermen with whom he associated.

Like some merchants and traders we have heard of—invaluable gentlemen as chairmen of speculating companies and general managers of swindling banks—he could abstract a decent percentage and yet make the accounts exactly tally. The gentlemen who have learned of Judas manage to cook the accounts most admirably for the shareholders, so as to get a rich roast for their own table, over which they, no doubt, entreat the Divine blessing. Judas was, in his known life, a most admirable person. He would have been an alderman before long, there is no doubt, and being very pious and richly gifted, his advent at Churches or Chapels would have created intense satisfaction.

"What a discreet and influential person," say the deacons. "Yes," replies the minister, "what an acquisition to our councils. If we could elect him to office, he would be of eminent service to the Church." I believe that the Father chose him as Apostle on purpose that we might not be at all surprised if we find such a man a minister in the pulpit, or a colleague of the minister, working as an officer in Christ's Church. These are solemn things, my Brothers and Sisters. Let us take them to heart, and if any of us wear a good character among men and stand high in office, let this question come home close to us—"Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?" Perhaps he who shall last ask the question is just the man who ought to have asked it first.

But, secondly, I call your attention to his real nature and sin. Judas was a man with a conscience. He could not afford to do without it. He was no Sadducee who could fling religion overboard. He had strong religious tendencies. He was no debauched person. He never spent a two-pence in vice on his life, not that he loved vice less, but that he loved the two-pence more. Occasionally he was generous, but then it was with other people's money. Well did he watch his lovely charge, the bag. He had a conscience, I say, and a ferocious conscience it was, when it once broke the chain, for it was his conscience which made him hang himself.

But then it was a conscience that did not sit regularly on the throne—it reigned by fits and starts. Conscience was not the leading element. Avarice predominated over conscience. He would get money, if honestly—he liked that best. But if he could not get it conscientiously, then anyhow in the world. He was but a small trader—his gains were no great things, or else he would not have sold Christ for so small a sum as that—ten pounds at the outside, of our money, at its present value—some three or four pounds, as it were, in those days. It was a poor price to take for the Master. But then, a little money was a great thing to him.

He had been poor. He had joined Christ with the idea that he would soon be proclaimed King of the Jews, and that then he should become a nobleman and be rich. Finding Christ a long while in coming to his kingdom, he had taken little by little, enough to lay by in store. And now, fearing that he was to be disappointed in all his dreams, and never having had any care for Christ, but only for himself, he gets out of what he thinks to have been a gross mistake in the best way he can, and makes money by his treason against his Lord.

Brethren, I do solemnly believe that of all hypocrites, these are the persons of whom there is the least hope—whose god is their money. You may reclaim a drunkard—thank God—we have seen many instances of that. And even a fallen Christian, who has given way to vice, may loathe his lust

and return from it. But I fear that the cases in which a man who is cankered with covetousness has ever been saved are so few that they might be written on your fingernail. This is a sin which the world does not rebuke. The most faithful minister can scarce smite its forehead.

God knows what thunders I have launched out against men who are all for this world and yet pretend to be Christ's followers. They always say, "It is not for me." What I should call stark naked covetousness, they call prudence, discretion, economy, and so on. And actions which I would scorn to spit upon, they will do, and think their hands quite clean after they have done them. And they still sit as God's people sit, and hear as God's people hear, and think that after they have sold Christ for paltry gain, they will go to Heaven.

O Souls, Souls, Souls, beware, beware, beware, most of all of greed! It is not money, nor the lack of money, but the love of money which is the root of all evil. It is not getting it—it is not even keeping it—it is loving it. It is making it your God. It is looking at that as the Mal. chance, and not considering the cause of Christ, nor the Truth of Christ, nor the holy life of Christ—but being ready to sacrifice everything for gains' sake. Oh, such men make giants in sin. They shall be set up forever as butts for infernal laughter. Their damnation shall be sure and just.

The third point is, the warning which Judas received and the way in which he persevered. Just think—the night before he sold his Master— what do you think the Master did? Why, He washed his feet! And yet he sold Him! Such condescension! Such love! Such familiarity! He took a towel and girded Himself and washed Judas's feet! And yet those very feet brought Judas as a guide to them that took Jesus! And you remember what He said when He had washed his feet—"Now you are clean, but not all." And He turned a tearful eye on Judas.

What a warning for him! What could be more explicit? Then, when the Supper came and they began to eat and drink together, the Lord said— "One of you shall betray Me." That was plain enough. And a little farther on He said explicitly—"He that dips with Me in the dish, the same is he." What opportunities for repentance! He cannot say he had not a faithful Preacher. What could have been more personal? If he does not repent now, what is to be done?

Moreover, Judas saw that which was enough to make a heart of adamant bleed—he saw Christ with agony on His face, for it was just after Christ had said, "Now is my soul troubled," that Judas left the feast, and went out to sell his Master. That face, so full of grief, ought to have turned him, must have turned him, if he had not been given up and left alone—to deliver over his soul unto his own devices. What language could have been more thundering than the words of Jesus Christ, when He said, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born"?

He had said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Now, if while these thunders rolled over his head, and the lightning flashes pointed at his person, if, then, this man was not aroused, what a Hell of infernal pertinacity and guilt must have been within his soul! Oh, but if any of you, if any of you shall sell Christ for the sake of keeping the shop open on Sunday. If you shall sell Christ for the extra wages you may earn for falsehood. Oh, if you shall sell Christ for the sake of the hundred pounds that you may lay hold of by a villainous contract—if you do that, you do not perish unwarned!

I come into this pulpit to please no man among you. God knows if I knew more of your follies you should have them pointed out yet more plainly! If I knew more of the tricks of business, I would not flinch to speak of them! But, O Sirs, I do entreat you by the blood of Judas, who hanged himself at last, turn—if such there are—turn from this evil, if by chance your sin may be blotted out!

Let us for one minute notice the act itself. He sought out his own temptation. He did not wait for the devil to come to him—he went after the devil. He went to the chief priests, and said, "What will you give me?" One of the old Puritan Divines says, "This is not the way people generally trade—they tell their own price." Judas says, "What will you give me? Anything you like." The Lord of Life and Glory sold at the buyer's own price. "What will you give me?" And another very prettily puts it, "What could they give him? What did the man want? He did not want food and raiment. He fared as well as his Master and the other disciples. He had enough. He had all that his needs could crave, and yet he said, 'What will you give me? What will you give me? What will you give me?' "

Alas, some people's religion is grounded on that one question—"What will you give me?" Yes, they would go to Church if there are any charities given away there—but if there were more to be had by not going—they would do that. "What will you give me?" Some of these people are not even so wise as Judas. Ah, there is a man over yonder who would sell the Lord for a crown, much more for ten pounds, as Judas did! Why, there are some who will sell Christ for the smallest piece of silver in our currency. They are tempted to deny their Lord, tempted to act in an unhallowed way, though the gains are so paltry that a year's worth of them would not come to much.

No subject could be more dreadful than this, if we really would but look at it carefully. This temptation happens to each of us. Do not deny it. We all like to gain. It is but natural that we should. The propensity to acquire is in every mind, and under lawful restrictions it is not an improper propensity. But when it comes into conflict with our allegiance to our Master, and in a world like this it often will, we must overcome it, or perish! There will arise occasions with some of you many times in a week in which it is "God—or gain." "Christ, or the thirty pieces of silver."

Therefore I am the more urgent in pressing this on you. Do not, though the world should bid its highest, though it should heap its comforts one upon another, and add fame, and honor, and respect—do not, I pray you, forsake your Master. There have been such cases—cases of persons who used to come here, but they found they did not get on—because Sunday was the best day's trade in the week. They had some good feelings, some good impressions once, but they have lost them now. We have known others who have said, "Well, you see, I did once think I loved the Lord, but my business went so badly when I came up to the House of God, that I left it—I renounced my profession."

Ah, Judas! Ah, Judas! Ah, Judas! Let me call you by your name, for such you are! This is the sin of the apostate all over again! God help you to repent of it and go, not to any priest, but to Christ, and make confession, if by chance you may be saved. You perceive that in the act of selling Christ, Judas was faithful to his master. "Faithful to his master?" you say. Yes, his master was the devil, and having made an agreement with him, he carried it out honestly. Some people are always very honest with the devil. If they say they will do a wrong thing, they say they ought to do it because they said they would. As if any oath could be binding on a man if it is an oath to do wrong!

"I will never go into that house again," some have said and they have said afterwards, "Well, I wish I had not said it." Was it a wrong thing? What is your oath then? It was an oath given to the devil. What was that foolish promise, but a promise to Satan—and will you be faithful to him? Ah, would God that you were faithful to Christ! Would that any of us were as true to Christ as Satan's servants are to their master!

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

We conclude with the repentance of Judas. He did repent. He did repent, but it was the repentance that works death. He did make a confession, but there was no respect to the deed itself—only to its consequences. He was very sorry that Christ was condemned. Some latent love that he had once had to a kind Master, came up when he saw that He was condemned. He did not think, perhaps, it would come to that. He may have had a hope that He would escape out of their hands. And then he would keep his thirty pieces of silver and perhaps sell Him over again.

Perhaps he thought that Jesus would rid Himself from their hands by some miraculous display of power, or would proclaim the kingdom. And so He, Himself, would only be hastening on that very blessed consummation. Friends, the man who repents of consequences does NOT repent. The ruffian repents of the gallows, but not of the murder—and that is no repentance at all. Human law, of course, must measure sin by consequences, but God's law does not. There is a point man on a railway who neglects his duty. There is a collision on the line and people are killed. Well, it is manslaughter of this man through his carelessness.

But that point man, perhaps, many times before had neglected his duty, and no accident came of it. Then he walked home and said, "Well, I have done no wrong." Now the wrong, mark you, is never to be measured by the accident, but by the thing itself. If you have committed an offense, and you have escaped undetected, it is just as vile in God's eyes. If you have done wrong, and Providence has prevented the natural result of the wrong, the honor of that is with God—you are as guilty as if your sin had been carried out to its fullest consequences, and the whole world set ablaze. Never measure sin by consequences, but repent of them as they are in themselves.

Though being sorry for consequences, since these are unalterable, this man was led to remorse. He sought a tree, adjusted the rope, and hanged himself. But in his haste he hanged himself so badly that the rope broke, he fell over a precipice, and there we read his insides gushed out. He lay a mangled mass at the bottom of the cliff, the horror of everyone who passed. Now you that make a gain of godliness—if there are such here— you may not come to a suicide's end, but take the lesson home. Mr. Keach, my venerable predecessor, gives at the end of one of his volumes of sermons, the death of a Mr. John Child. John Child had been a Dissenting minister and for the sake of gain, to get a living, he joined the Episcopalians against his conscience. He sprinkled infants, and practiced all the other paraphernalia of the Church against his conscience. At last, at

last, he was arrested with such terrors for having done what he had, that he renounced his living. He finally took to a sick bed, and his dying oaths, blasphemies, and curses were something so dreadful, that his case was the wonder of that age.

Mr. Keach wrote a full account of it, and many went to try what they could do to comfort the man, but he would say, "Get out of here! Get out of here! It is of no use! I have sold Christ." You remember, also, the wonderful death of Francis Spira. In all literature, there is nothing so awful as the death of Spira. The man had known the Truth of God—he stood well among reformers. He was an honored, and to a certain extent, apparently a faithful man. But he went back to the Church of Rome! He apostatized. And then when conscience was aroused he did not fly to Christ, but he looked at the consequences instead of at the sin. And so, feeling that the consequences could not be altered, he forget that the sin might be pardoned, and perished in extreme agonies.

May it never be the unhappy lot of any of us to lay in such a deathbed, but the Lord have mercy upon us now, and make us search our hearts. Those of you who say, "We do not want that sermon," are probably the persons who need it most. He who shall say, "Well, we have no Judas among us," is probably a Judas himself. Oh, search yourselves! Turn out every cranny—look in every corner of your soul to see whether your religion is for Christ's sake and for Truth's sake, and for God's sake—or whether it is a profession which you take up because it is a respectable thing. Make sure it is not a profession which you keep up because it keeps you up. The Lord search us and try us and bring us to know our ways.

And now, in conclusion—there is a Savior, and that Savior is willing to receive us now. If I am not a saint, I am a sinner. Would it not be best for all of us to go again to the Fountain and wash and be clean? Let each of us go anew and say, "Master, You know what I am. I know not myself. But, if I am wrong, make me right. If I am right, keep me so. My trust is in You. Keep me now, for Your own sake, Jesus." Amen.

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

Luke 22,60-62 #2034 - Peter's Restoration

PETER'S RESTORATION

NO. 2034

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 22, 1888,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crowed. And the Lord turned

and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He

had said unto him, Before the cock crowed, you shall deny Me thrice.

And Peter went out and wept bitterly."

Luke 22:60-62.

PETER had fallen terribly. He had denied his Master, denied Him repeatedly, denied Him with oaths, denied Him in His Presence, while His Master was being smitten and falsely charged. He denied Him, though he was an Apostle. Denied him, though he had declared that should all men forsake Him, yet he never would. It was a sad, sad sin. Remember what led up to it. It was, first, Peter's presumption and self-confidence. He reckoned that he could never stumble and for that very reason he speedily fell. A haughty spirit goes before a fall. Oh, that we might look to the roots of bitter flowers and destroy them!

If presumption is flourishing in the soil of our hearts today we shall soon see the evil fruit which will come of it. Reliance upon our firmness of character, depth of experience, clearness of insight, or maturity in grace will, in the end, land us in disgraceful failure. We must either deny ourselves, or we shall deny our Lord. If we cleave to self-confidence, we shall not cleave to Him.

Immediately, Peter's denial was owing to cowardice. The brave Peter in the presence of a maid was ashamed. He could not bear to be pointed out as a follower of the Galilean. He did not know what might follow upon it— but he saw his Lord without a friend and felt that it was a lost cause and he did not care to avow it. Only to think that Peter, under temporary discouragement, should play the coward! Yet cowardice treads upon the heels of boasting—he that thinks he can fight the world will be the first man to run away.

His sin also arose from his want of watchfulness. His Master had said to him, "What, could you not watch with Me one hour?" And no doubt there was more meaning in the words than appeared on the surface. The Lord several times said to him, "Pray, that you enter not into temptation." The words were repeated with deep impressiveness, for they were greatly needed. But Peter had not watched—he had been warming his hands. He did not pray—he felt too strong in himself to be

driven to special prayer. Therefore, when the gusts of temptation came, they found Peter's boat unprepared for the storm and they drove it upon a rock.

When Peter first denied his Master a cock crowed. Peter must have heard that crowing or he would not have communicated the fact to the Evangelists who recorded it. But though he heard it, he was an example of those who have ears but hear not. One would have thought that the warning would have touched his conscience. But it did not. And when the cock crowed a second time, after he had committed three denials, it might not have awakened him from his dreadful sleep if a higher instrumentality had not been used, namely, a look from the Lord Jesus.

God keep us free from this spirit of slumber, for it is to the last degree dangerous! Peter was under the direful influence of Satan, for it was a night wherein the powers of darkness were specially active. "This is your hour," said Jesus, "and the power of darkness." That same influence which assailed the Savior unsuccessfully—for, said He, "the prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me"—assailed Peter with sad result. For the Evil One had something in Peter and he soon found it out. The sparks from Satan's flint and steel fell upon our Lord as upon water. But Peter's heart was like a tinder-box. And when the sparks fell, they found fuel there. Oh, that we may be kept from the assaults of Satan!

"Lead us not into temptation" is a necessary prayer. But the next petition is specially noteworthy—"but deliver us from the Evil One." A man never gets anything out of the devil, even if he conquers him. You will find in combat with him that even if you win the victory, you come off with gashes and wounds of which you will carry the scars to your grave. "All the while," says Mr. Bunyan, while Christian was fighting with Apollyon, "I did note that he did not so much as give one smile." Oh no, there is nothing to smile about when the arch-enemy is upon us. He is such a master of the cruel art of soul-wounding, that every stroke tells.

He knows our weak places in the present. He brings to remembrance our errors in the past and he paints in blackest colors the miseries of the future and so seeks to destroy our faith. All his darts are fiery ones. It takes all a man's strength and a great deal more to ward off his cunning and cruel cuts. The worst of it is that as in Peter's case, he casts a spell over men so that they do not fight at all but yield themselves an easy prey. Our Savior said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Peter was as much under the power of Satan as corn is in the hand of the man who winnows it. He went up and down in that sieve like a helpless thing and so passed from simple falsehood to plain denials of his Master with oaths and curses.

I desire in this discourse to speak chiefly of Peter's restoration. Peter was down. But he was soon up again. One writer says the story should rather be called Peter's restoration than Peter's fall. His fall was soon over—he was like a little child learning to walk, scarcely down before his mother has him up again. It was not a continuance in a sin, like that of David, who remained for months without repentance. But it was the quick speech of a man carried away by sudden temptation and it was followed by a speedy repentance. Upon his restoration we are going to meditate.

It was brought about by two outward means. I like to think of the singular combination—the crowing of the cock and a look from the Lord. When I come to preach to you it almost makes me smile to think that God should save a soul through me. I may find a fit image of myself in the poor

rooster. Mine is poor crowing. But as the Master's look went with the bird's crowing, so, I trust, it will go with my feeble preaching. The next time you also go out to try and win a soul for Jesus, say to yourself, "I cannot do it—I cannot melt a hard, rebellious heart. But yet the Lord may use me. And if there comes a happy conjunction of my feeble words with my Lord's potent look, then the heart will dissolve in streams of repentance."

Crow away, poor bird—if Jesus looks while you are crowing, you will not crow in vain—but Peter's heart will break. The two things are joined together and let no man put them asunder—commonplace instrumentality and the Divine Worker. Christ has all the glory and all the more glory because He works by humble means. I trust that there will be, this morning, a conjunction of the weakness of the preacher with the strength of the Holy Spirit so that stony hearts may be broken and God glorified.

This morning, first, let us look at the Lord who looked. And secondly let us look into the look which the Lord looked. And then, thirdly, let us look at Peter, upon whom the Lord looked. We will be all the while looking—may our Lord look upon us. May His Holy Spirit work with His Holy Word!

I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE LORD, WHO LOOKED UPON PETER. Can you picture Him up there in the hall, up yonder steps, before the high priest and the council? Peter is down below in the area of the house warming his hands at the fire. Can you see the Lord Jesus turning round and fixing His eyes intently upon His erring disciple? What do you see in that look?

I see in that look, first, that which makes me exclaim—What thoughtful love! Jesus is bound, He is accused, He has just been smitten on the face—but His thought is of wandering Peter. You want all your wits about you when you are before cruel judges and are called upon to answer false charges. You are the more tried when there is no man to stand by you, or bear witness on your behalf—it is natural, at such an hour—that all your thoughts should be engaged with your own cares and sorrows. It would have been no reproach had the thoughts of our Lord been concentrated on His personal sufferings. And all the less so because these were for the sake of others.

But our blessed Master is thinking of Peter and His heart is going out towards His unworthy disciple. That same influence which made His heart drive out its store of blood through every pore of His body in the bloody sweat now acted upon His soul and drove His thoughts outward towards that member of His mystical body which was most in danger. Peter was thought of when the Redeemer was standing to be mocked and reviled. Blessed be His dear name, Jesus always has an eye for His people, whether He is in His shame or in His Glory.

Jesus always has an eye for those for whom He shed His blood. Though now He reigns in Glory, He still looks steadily upon His own—His delight is in them and His care is over them. There was not a particle of selfishness about our Savior. "He saved others; Himself He could not save." He looked to others but He never looked to Himself. I see, then, in our Lord's looking upon Peter, a wondrously thoughtful love.

I exclaim, next, What a boundless condescension! If our Lord's eyes had wandered that day upon "that other disciple" that was known to the high priest, or if He had even looked upon some of the servants of the house, we should not have been so astonished. But when Jesus turns, it is to look upon Peter, the man from whom we should naturally have turned away our faces, after his

wretched conduct. He had acted most shamefully and cruelly and yet the Master's eyes sought him out in boundless pity! If there is a man here who feels himself to be near akin to the devil, I pray the Lord to look first at him.

If you feel as if you have sinned yourself out of the pale of humanity by having cast off all good things and by having denied the Lord that bought you, yet still consider the amazing mercy of the Lord. If you are one of His, His pitying eyes will find you out. For even now it follows you as it did Hagar, when she cried, "God see me." But oh, the compassion of that look! When first I understood that the Lord looked on me with love in the midst of my sin, it did seem so wonderful! He whom the heavens adore, before whose sight the whole universe is stretched out as on a map, yet passes by all the glories of Heaven that He may fix His tender gaze upon a wandering sheep and may in great mercy bring it back again to the fold. For the Lord of Glory to look upon a disciple who denies Him is boundless condescension!

But then, again, what tender wisdom do I see here! "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." He knew best what to do—He did not speak to him but looked upon him. He had spoken to Peter before and that voice had called him to be a fisher of men. He had given Peter His hand before and saved him from a watery grave when he was beginning to sink. But this time He gives him neither His voice nor His hand but that which was equally effectual and intensely suitable—He lent him His eyes—"The Lord looked upon Peter."

How wisely does Christ always choose the way of expressing His affection and working our good! If He had spoken to Peter, the mob would have assailed him, or at least the ribald crowd would have remarked upon the sorrow of the Master and the treachery of the disciple—our gracious Lord will never needlessly expose the faults of His chosen. Possibly no words could have expressed all that was thrown into that look of compassion. Why, Brethren, a volume as big as a Bible is contained within that look of Jesus.

I defy all the tongues and all the pens in the world to tell us all that our Divine Lord meant by that look. Our Savior employed the most prudent, the most comprehensive, the most useful method of speaking to the heart of His erring follower. He looked volumes into him. His glance was a Divine hieroglyphic full of unutterable meanings which it conveyed in a more clear and vivid way than words could have done.

As I think of that look again, I am compelled to cry out—What Divine power is here! Why, dear Friends, this look worked wonders. I sometimes preach with all my soul to Peter and, alas—he likes my sermon and forgets it. I have known Peter read a good book full of most powerful pleading and when he has read it through, he has shut it up and gone to sleep. I remember my Peter when he lost his wife and one would have thought it would have touched him and it did—with some natural feeling. Yet he did not return to the Lord, whom he had forsaken but continued in his backsliding.

See, then, how our Lord can do with a look what we cannot do with a sermon! What the most powerful writer cannot do with hundreds of pages and what affliction cannot do with even its heaviest stroke. The Lord looked and Peter wept bitterly. I cannot help thinking with Isaac Williams that there is a majestic simplicity in the expressions here used—"The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter went out and wept bitterly." The passage reminds us of that first of

Genesis—"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

As the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians and troubled the Egyptians, so did He now look into Peter's heart and his thoughts troubled him. Oh, the power of the Lord Christ! If there was this power about Him when He was bound before His accusers, what is His power now that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them? In that look there was Divinity. The Son of God looked upon Peter—the text does not use the name Jesus but it expressly says, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." That Divine look did the deed.

Let me beg you to note what sacred teaching is here. The teaching is of practical value and should be at once carried out by the followers of Jesus. You, dear Friend, are a Christian man or a Christian woman. You have been kept by Divine Grace from anything like disgraceful sin. Thank God it is so. I dare say if you look within you will find much to be ashamed of. But yet you have been kept from presumptuous and open sins. Alas, one who was once a friend of yours has disgraced himself—he was a little while ago a member of the Church but he has shamefully turned aside. You cannot excuse his sin—on the contrary, you are forced to feel great indignation against his folly, his untruthfulness, his wickedness.

He has caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme and has done awful mischief to the cause of righteousness. Now I know what will be suggested to you. You will be inclined to cut his acquaintance, to disown him altogether and scarcely to look at him if you meet him in the street. This is the manner of men—but not the manner of Jesus. I charge you, act not in so un-Christlike a manner. The Lord turned and looked on Peter—will not His servants look on him? You are not perfect like your Lord. You are only a poor sinful creature like your fallen Brother. What? Are you too proud to look at the fallen one? Will you not give him a helping hand? Will you not try to bring him back?

The worst thing you can do with a backslider is to let him keep on sliding back. Your duty should be your pleasure and your duty is to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, remembering yourself also, lest you also be tempted." O Brothers and Sisters, it is a very little thing that has kept some of us from turning aside unto folly. One grain more and the scale would have turned in favor of a great fall. Our steps have well-near slipped. When we are proud of our sure standing, the Lord may well be angry with us for our vanity and He may justly say, "How can I endure this pride? I have taken great care of this man and watched over him to keep him out of sin and now he takes the credit of it all and plays the great man and fancies that he will be defiled if he associates with My poor wandering children."

Which, do you think, is worse in God's sight—the sudden fall into sin, or the long-continued pride? Which boasts itself in the presence of the Lord and looks contemptuously upon erring ones? It is not my office to become a measurer of sins. But I would earnestly enforce this plain duty—since our own Lord and Master looked on backsliding Peter, let us seek out our wandering Brethren.

One more lesson—observe what heavenly comfort is here—"The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Yes, Jesus looks upon sinners, still. The doctrine of God's omniscience is far oftener set forth in a hard way than in a cheering way. Have you ever heard a sermon from, "You God see me," of which the essence was—therefore tremble and be afraid? That is hardly fair to the text. For

when Hagar cried, "You God see me," it was because the Lord had interposed to help her when she had fled from her mistress. It was comfort to her that there she also had looked after Him that had looked upon her.

There is a dark side to "You God see me." But it is not half so dark as it would be if God did not see us. It is true, O Sinner, that God has seen your sin and all the aggravations of it. But it is also true that as He sees your ruin, your misery, your sadness, He has compassion on you. He sees your sin that He may remove it and make you clean in His sight. As the Lord looked upon Peter, so He looks upon you. He has not turned His back on you. He has not averted the gaze of His pity. He sees to the bottom of your heart and reads all your thoughts. You have not to go about to find God—He is looking upon you. "He is not far from everyone of us." He is within eyesight. You are to look to Him. And if you do, your eyes will meet His eyes, for already He looks upon you.

I think we have gathered much from this brief look at the Lord who looked upon Peter. I doubt not that had we more time and more insight, we should see greater things than these.

II. Now let us go on to the second point and see whether we cannot gather still more instruction. LET US LOOK INTO THE LOOK WHICH THE LORD GAVE TO PETER. Help us again, most gracious Spirit!

That look was, first of all, a marvelous refreshment to Peter's memory. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." What a sight it must have been for Peter! Our dear Master's face was that night all red from the bloody sweat. He must have appeared emaciated in body. His eyes weary with want of sleep and His whole countenance the vision of grief. If ever a picture of the Man of Sorrows could have been drawn, it should have been taken at that moment when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. By torchlight and the flickering flame of the fire in the court of the hall of Caiaphas, Peter saw a vision which would never fade from his mind. He saw the Man whom he loved as he had never seen Him before. This was He who called him, when he was fishing, to become a fisher of men. This was He who bade him spread the net and caused him to take an incredible quantity of fishes, insomuch that the boat began to sink and he cried out, "Depart from me. For I am a sinful man, O Lord."

This was He who had made him walk on the water and at other times had rebuked the winds and raised the dead. This was He with whom Peter had been upon the Mount of Transfiguration! Truly there was a wonderful change from the glistening whiteness of the Mount to the ghastliness of that sad hour! Though the lines of that reverend face were stained with blood, yet Peter could tell that it was the same Lord with whom he had enjoyed three years of intimate companionship and tender unveiling. All this must, in a moment, have flashed upon poor Peter's mind. And I do not wonder that in the remembrance of it all he went out and wept bitterly.

He did love His Lord. His denial was not of the heart but of the tongue. And, therefore, as all the grounds of his faith came before his mind anew, his heart was broken into a thousand pieces with grief that he should have been false to such a Friend. Yes, that look awoke a thousand slumbering memories and all these called upon the sincere heart of Peter to repent of its ungenerous weakness.

Next, that turning of the Master was a special reminder of His warning words. Jesus did not say it in words but He did more than say it by His look. "Ah, Peter! Did not I tell you it would be so? You

said, 'Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended.' Did I not tell you that before cock-crowing you would deny Me thrice?" No rebuke was uttered. And yet the tender eye of the Lord had revealed to Peter his own extreme folly and his Master's superior wisdom. Now he saw his own character and perceived his Lord's discernment.

It was a prophecy and like all other prophecies, it was understood after it was fulfilled. We read that, "Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He said unto him, Before the cock crowed, you shall deny Me thrice." It is clear, then, that our Lord's look was a special reminder of His former words—it stirred up Peter's mind by way of remembrance and made him see how foolish he had been and how inexcusable was his fault.

Surely it was, also, a moving appeal to Peter's heart. I bid you notice just now, in the reading of the chapter, that this story of Peter is singularly interwoven into the narrative of our Savior's passion—it is so interwoven because it constitutes an essential part of that passion. We must not regard it as an accidental incident. It was part and parcel of that grief which He had to bear when He stood in our place. It was written of old, "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." And this scattering of the sheep, of which Peter was a notable instance, was one of the bitter ingredients of our Redeemer's mental anguish.

"Lover and friend have You put far from Me," is His complaint in the Psalm. When the Savior showed Himself to Peter with all those lines of grief upon His face, He seemed to say to him, "Can you deny Me now? I am bound for you and do you deny Me? I stand here to be adjudged to death for you and do you deny Me? Now is the hour of My agony and do you deny Me?" The Lord could not have looked at Peter without creating strong emotions in the breast of the weak disciple who now found himself in so sad a plight. That look touched very tender cords. There was no need for a single word of appeal—that look sufficed to stir the deepest part of Peter's nature.

What do you think that look chiefly said? My thought about it, as I turned it over, was this—when the Lord looked upon Peter, though He did refresh his memory and make an appeal to his conscience, yet there was still more evident a glorious manifestation of love. If I may be permitted humbly and reverently to read what was written on my Master's face, I think it was this—"And yet I love you, Peter, I love you still! You have denied Me but I look upon you still as Mine. I cannot give you up. I have loved you with an everlasting love and notwithstanding all your illconduct towards Me, I am looking for you and expecting to receive you. I have not turned My back on you.

"Behold, I look towards you with tender regard, foreseeing that you will yet serve Me and prove the truth of your devotion to Me. Despair not, O Peter, for I will receive you again and you shall glorify Me." Judging what would break my heart the quickest if I had thus denied my Master, it seems to me that I should be most affected by His saying to me, "And yet, despite your sin, I love you still." Love is the great heartbreaker. Immutable love is that Divine hammer which breaks the rock in pieces. Though a man should have sinned himself into great hardness of heart, yet almighty love can soften him. Who can resist the charms of Divine Grace unchangeable?

Sharper than a sword is a look of love—more fierce than coals of juniper are the flames of love. One said, the other day, speaking of a person who has gone awfully astray after having been a preacher of the Word, "If I did not believe in the doctrine of unchanging love I do not think I dare pray for him. But since I believe that God will bring him back again, I pray with humble confidence

that he will be restored." That which is an encouragement to prayer for others will be a help towards our return if we have gone astray. I love to believe that my Lord will bring His wanderers back.

O you who are anxious to return to Him, let this cheer you—"Yet does He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him." This doctrine wins men back. There are wicked men who turn it into an argument for continuing in sin. But their damnation is just. True men will see, in the measureless and unchanging love of Christ, a reason which will put wings to their feet when they hasten back to Him from whom they have gone astray.

Again—this look penetrated Peter's inmost heart. It is not every look that we receive that goes very deep. I look with eyes of deep affection at men from this pulpit and I perceive that they know my meaning. But they soon shake it off. But our Savior has an eye to which the joints and marrow are visible. He looks into the secret chambers of the soul. For His look is a sunbeam and bears its own light with it, lighting up the dark places of our nature by its own radiance. Peter could not help feeling, for he was pricked in the heart by the arrow of Christ's glance.

How many persons are affected by religion only in the head! It does not affect their heart and life. I am grieved when I hear of some of you who are regular hearers and take pleasure in my preaching and yet, after many years, you are not a bit better. You have had spasms of improvement but they have ended in nothing. You go back to the mire after you have been washed. You are a hearer of the Gospel and yet a drunkard. Your voice is heard in a Psalm but it may also be heard in an oath. It is a shocking thing. But I have done my best. I can preach to your ears but I cannot look into your hearts. Oh, that my Lord would give such a glance at you this morning as should impart light into you and cause you to see yourself and to see Him and then the tears would fill your eyes!

One fact must not escape our notice—our Lord's look at Peter was a revival of all Peter's looking unto Jesus. The Lord's look upon Peter took effect because Peter was looking to the Lord. Do you catch it? If the Lord had turned and looked on Peter and Peter's back had been turned on the Lord, that look would not have reached Peter, nor affected him. The eyes met to produce the desired result. Notwithstanding all Peter's wanderings, he was anxious about his Lord and therefore looked to see what was done with Him. Even while he warmed his hands at the fire, he kept looking into the inner hall. His eyes were constantly looking in the direction of the Lord Jesus.

While he wandered about among the maids and male servants, talking to them, fool that he was—yet still he would perpetually steal a glance that way to see how it fared with the Man he loved. He had not given up the habit of looking to his Lord. If he had not still, in a measure, looked to his Master, how would the look of Jesus have been observed by him? His eyes must look through your eyes to get to your heart. The remainders of faith are the sparks among the ashes of piety and the Lord blows on these to raise a fire. If there is a poor soul here that, despite his backsliding, can yet feel, "I am trusting in Jesus and if I perish, I will perish there," there is hope for that soul.

If you have given up the outward forms of religion it is a grievous fault—but if you still inwardly look to the Crucified, there is something in you to work upon. There is an eye which can receive the look of Jesus. It is through the eyes that look to Jesus, that Jesus looks and lets fresh light and

hope into the soul. Oh that you who have this lingering faith in the Lord may now receive a look from Him which shall work in you a bitter, salutary, saving repentance—without which you can never be restored!

This look was altogether between the Lord and Peter. Nobody knew that the Lord looked on Peter, except Peter and his Lord. That Divine Grace which saves a soul is not a noisy thing—neither is it visible to any but the receiver. This morning, if the Grace of God comes to anyone of you in power, it will be unperceived by those who sit on either side of you in the pew—they will hear the same words but of the Divine operation which accompanies them they will know nothing—the eyes of the Lord will not speak to them as it is speaking to the awakened one. Do you know anything of the secret love-look of the Lord Jesus?

The whole process may not have occupied more than a second of time. "The Lord turned and looked on Peter." It took less time to do than it takes to tell. Yet in that instant an endless work was done. How soon can Jesus change the heart! "He spoke and it was done"—I venture to alter that verse and say, "He looked and it was done." Lord, look on sinful Peter now! Work a miracle with your eyes! Even here, let some sinner look to You because You have looked on him.

III. Now I must go to my third point—LET US LOOK AT PETER AFTER THE LORD HAD LOOKED AT HIM. What is Peter doing? When the Lord looked on Peter the first thing Peter did was to feel awakened. Peter's mind had been sleeping. The charcoal fire had not done him much good, the fumes of it are evil. The dust of Satan's sieve had got into his eyes. He was confused with very sorrow for his dear Master, whom he truly loved. Peter was hardly Peter that night. I think I had better say, Peter was too much Peter, and his mind had more of Peter's stone in it, than of Christ's flesh.

He had forgotten that he was an Apostle. He had forgotten that which he had declared when the Lord said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon BarJona: for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you." Again, I remind you how significantly it is written, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." For it hints that Peter now saw his Lord's Deity through the veil of His humiliation and anguish. He had forgotten his Lord's Deity and thus he had, in thought, denied his Lord. He was off the lines and was in a sleepy state. He was what Paul calls "bewitched," and under the influence of a spiritual soporific, administered by Satan. The Lord's look brought him to his better self and aroused all the spiritual life which had been dormant in him—"Peter remembered"—and by this remembrance he was restored.

The next effect was, it took away all Peter's foolhardiness. Peter had made his way into the high priest's hall but now he made his way out of it. He had not felt in any danger, though in the worst of company. What did he care for the girl that kept the door? Surely he was too much of a man to mind her remarks. What did he care for the men that were round the fire? They were rough fellows but he had been a fisherman and quite able to cope with the priest's bailiffs. But now the brag is gone out of him. No sooner had Jesus looked upon him than Peter declined all further risks. Now he shows the better part of valor and with great discretion quits the dangerous society of the high priest's palace.

Revival of Divine Grace in the heart is the death of presumption. The man who runs risks with his soul is not in a right state of mind. Perhaps the Savior's glance conveyed a hint to Peter that he

had no business where he was. It may have seemed to say to him, "You had better be gone from these surroundings." At any rate, that was the effect it produced. That palace in which the Lord fared so badly could not be a fit place for a disciple. To be warming himself at the fire was quite inconsistent for Peter while Jesus was being mocked by His enemies. A sight of the Lord Jesus makes many things seem incongruous which else might appear right enough. All Peter's daring vanished. He turned his back on maids and men and went out into the darkness of the night.

We do not hear of his coming near the Cross—in fact, we hear no more of him till the resurrection morning—for Peter was sensible enough to feel that he could not trust himself any more. He placed himself in the background till his Lord summoned him to the front. I wish that some religious professors whose lives have been questionable had grace enough to do the same. When I see a man who has sinned grievously pushing himself speedily to the front, I cannot believe that he has a due sense of the evil he has worked, or of his own unfitness to be in the place of peril.

Above all, shun the place where you have fallen. Do not linger in it for a moment. Go out, even though you leave the comfortable fire behind you. Better be in the cold than stay where your soul is in danger. Till Peter had received from the Lord's own mouth abundant assurance of his restoration to his office by the threefold charge to feed the sheep and lambs, we do not find him again in the forefront.

That look of Christ severed Peter from the crowd. He was no longer among the fellows around the fire. He had not another word to say to them—he quit their company in haste. It is well for Believers to feel that they are not of the world! They should flee out of Sodom. The Lord has severed us from the multitude by His Divine choice and the separation should be our choice.

Oh, that the arrows of the great Lord would this morning pierce some soul even as a huntsman wounds a stag! Oh, that the wounded soul, like Peter, would seek solitude! The stag seeks the thicket to bleed and die alone. But the Lord will come in secret to the wounded heart and draw out the arrow. Alone is the place for a penitent. Out in the darkness is far better for you than around the fire where coarse jokes are bandied while Christ is mocked. There must be confession and weeping alone. If Christ has looked upon you, you must get away from the men of the world and indeed from all others. The solitude of your chamber will suit you best.

That look of Christ also opened the sluices of Peter's heart—he went out and wept bitterly. There was gall in the tears he wept, for they were the washings of his bitter sorrow. Dear Friends, if we have sinned with Peter, God grant us grace to weep with Peter. Many will think of Peter's wandering who forget Peter's weeping. Sin, even though it is forgiven, is a bitter thing. Even though Christ may look away your despair, He will not look away your penitence. "He went out and wept bitterly." Oh, how he chided himself! "How could I have acted so!" How he smote his breast, and sighed, "How can I ever look up? Yet is He very precious. That look forgave me. But I can never forgive myself."

He remembered it all his life and could never hear a cock crow without feeling the water in his eyes. Yet I want you to notice that that look of Christ gave him relief. It is a good thing to be able to weep. Those who cannot weep are the people that suffer most. A pent-up sorrow is a terrible sorrow. The Lord touched a secret spring and made Peter's grief flow out in floods. And that must have greatly eased him. I have frequently heard people say, "I had a good cry, and after that, I was

able to bear it." People die of bursting hearts when no tears relieve them. I thank God for Peter, that he could weep bitterly, for thus the Holy Spirit came to him with comfort.

O Master, look on some poor dry heart here—some poor heart that cannot feel its sinfulness but would if it could—and give it feeling! Look on the heart which cannot repent, that is crying, "I would, but cannot feel contrition." Lord, You did make the rock yield water at the smiting of the rod—use Your poor stick of a servant this morning to smite the rocky heart and let the waters of repentance flow out.

And now, to conclude, it made Peter as long as he lived, ashamed to be ashamed. Peter was never ashamed after this. Who was it that stood up at Pentecost and preached? Was it not Peter? Was he not always foremost in testifying to his Lord and Master? I trust that if any of us have been falling back and especially if we have wandered into sin, we may get such a restoration from the Lord, Himself, that we may become better Christians ever afterwards. I do not want you to break a bone, I pray God you never may. But if you ever do, may the heavenly Surgeon so set it that it may become thicker and stronger than before.

Courage was the bone in Peter which snapped. But when it was set, it became the strongest bone in his nature and never broke again. When the Lord sets the bones of His people they never break again—He does His work effectually. The man who has erred by anger becomes meek and gentle. The man who has erred by drink quits the deadly cup and loathes it. The man who has sinned by shame becomes the bravest of the company.

O Lord Jesus, I have tried to preach YOU this morning, but I cannot look with Your eyes. You must look on erring ones Yourself. Look, Savior! Look, Sinner! "There is life in a look AT the crucified One," because there is life in a look FROM the crucified One. May Jesus look and by His Grace may the sinner look, too! Amen.

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Luke 22,61-62 #2771 - Peter's Fall and Restoration

PETER'S FALL AND RESTORATION

NO. 2771

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 23, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 22, 1882.

"And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the

word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the rooster crows,

you will deny Me three times. So Peter went out and wept bitterly."

Luke 22:61-62.

PETER'S fall, as we noticed in our reading, is four times recorded, at

considerable length, but it is not once excused. There is not, in any one of the records, a single word said by way of palliation of his great guilt. John pictures Peter's sin in colors of an almost neutral tint, yet he does not lessen its gravity.

Why, do you think, is this sad record thus given four times? Is it not in order that we should give it fourfold attention? It deserves this special mention, first, because it must have greatly increased the grief of the Lord Jesus Christ to know that while He was enduring untold indignities on His people's behalf, His most prominent disciple was denying Him with oaths and curses down at the lower end of the hall. Surely, this must have cut Him to the quick! I cannot imagine that any of the tortures that He endured from His enemies could have caused Him so much pain as this wicked denial by one of His closest friends. Let your pity and love to Jesus flow in deep and broad streams while you behold him that ate bread with Him thus lifting up his heel against Him and even declaring that He knows not the Man! Blessed Master, there is not one tint of all the colors of grief that is lacking in the picture of Your passion! It is not possible to depict sufferings more acute and intense than was Yours when You died, "the Just for the unjust," to bring us to God.

But, next, I think that Peter's fall and restoration are thus fully recorded to set forth the greatness of our Redeemer's saving power in the immediate prospect of His cruel death upon the Cross. Is it not wonderful to think that before He dies, He restores this great backslider—I had almost said, "this open apostate," for so he was, according to his own language, though he was not so in heart? I can, in imagination, see poor Peter bending before the Cross of Calvary and looking up,

through tears of grief and joy, as he mourns his great guilt and sees it all forgiven!

Then comes the dying thief, to represent another class of characters who bring great Glory to our dying Lord. Peter is the backslider restored—the dying thief is the sinner saved at the 11th hour. He was on the very brink of Hell, yet the Master stretched out His hand to rescue him,

Volume 48 1saying, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." I cannot imagine two incidents revealing greater Divine Grace than these two, which so richly adorn and embellish the Cross! As captives chained to the wheels of the returning conqueror's chariot make his triumphal procession the more illustrious, so is Christ upon the Cross the more manifestly triumphant in His Infinite Grace as He leads the restored Peter back to his Apostleship and takes the penitent thief, plucked from Perdition, up with Himself into the Paradise of God!

Moreover, do you not think that there is, in this fourfold record, an instructive lesson for us concerning the frailty of the best of men? Holy Scripture does not tell us much about the best of men who lived in the olden times—its history of the saints is somewhat scanty—but it is particular in recording their faults, as if its special purpose was to remind us that the best of men are but men at the best! This Peter, who seemed to lead the van, was yet so frail and fallible—so far from being the first "Infallible Bishop of Rome"—that he even denied his Lord and Master! That is about the only point, so far as I can see, in which the Pope of Rome is like Peter, for he, too, has great presumption and he can, with his bulls and his curses, go about as far as Peter did in denying his Lord! Peter's fall seems to say to each of us, "You, too, are weak. You, too, will fall if you are left to yourself. Therefore trust wholly to your Master, but never trust in yourself. Look always to Him and rely not upon your own experience, or the firmness of your own resolutions—for you will assuredly fall, as Peter did, unless the almighty hand of Christ shall hold you up."

These lessons might profit us even if we learned no others, but I think we may find some more as I now proceed to speak to you, first, concerning Peter's fall. Next, concerning the means of his recovery. Thirdly, concerning the signs of his restoration and, afterwards, if we have time for them, I hope to make a few general remarks upon the whole incident of Peter's fall and restoration.

I. First, then, concerning PETER'S FALL. It was a very sad fall because it was the fall of one of the most favored

of Christ's disciples. We know that there is such a thing as election and that there is such a thing as election out of election and, in the case of Christ's disciples, the principle was carried still further, for there were some who were the elect out of the elect of the elect! Christ had many disciples, yet He said to the Apostles, "I have chosen you twelve." Out of those twelve, he had evidently chosen three—Peter, James and John— who were privileged to be with Him on various occasions when all others were shut out. Peter had been especially favored, so that probably not even John surpassed him in the honor which his Master had put upon him. After his declaration concerning Christ's Messiahship and Deity, Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." So you see that Peter was a highly favored man—and for him to deny his Master was a very terrible sin. The higher our privilege, dear Friends, the greater is our responsibility! The nobler our vocation is, the more horrible is our sin when we fall into it. Secondly, Peter's fall was especially sad because he had been faithfully warned concerning it. Our Lord had said to the eleven, "All of you shall be

offended because of Me this night." And then, when Peter declared that he would not be offended, our Lord plainly foretold his triple denial. When Jesus, after the first part of his agony in the garden, came back to the three especially favored disciples and found them all asleep, he said to Peter, "Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch you and pray lest you enter into temptation." So that Peter knew the danger to which he was exposed. He was not, as some inexperienced persons are, surprised all of a sudden—carried off their feet by a fierce tornado of temptation. If he did not watch and pray, he ought to have done so, for he had been expressly warned, yes, and told that in that very night, not only would he be in danger, but that he would actually fall into the snare which Satan, the great fowler, was setting for him! After that warning, he was not like a bird caught in a trap which it has not seen, but like one that flies boldly into the snare. Solomon says in Proverbs, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird"—yet Peter ran into it in spite of all the warning that he had received. This made his sin all the greater! And if any of you sin against the Light of God, your sin will be all the more gross and aggravated.

Further, the guilt of Peter's sin is enhanced by the fact that it came so soon after his claim of fidelity to his Master. He had said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended." Now, mark that declaration was made in the evening and the sun had not risen—the cock had not crowed—before he had thrice denied his Master! It may have been quite late in the evening when he uttered his boastful declaration and the night had only darkened down to midnight, or an hour or two after, before he had, with oaths and curses, denied that he even knew his Lord. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if we eat our words as soon as that—if we go home from this House of Prayer and fall into sin. Or if tomorrow, while yet the sacred bread of the Communion Table is scarcely digested, we shall so act as practically to deny Christ—it will be a very terrible thing! It would have been bad enough if Peter had sinned thus 20 years after making his profession of love to Christ— but to deny his Lord an hour or two after such a vehement declaration— this was wicked, indeed!

Observe, also, that Peter's sin had degrees in it. This makes it the more interesting to us, especially if we have, ourselves, gone any part of the same evil way, for, the first time he denied his Master, it was not in the same style as the third time. Being let into the High Priest's palace, the damsel who opened the door looked him in the face and, afterwards, when Peter was sitting with the servants and officers around the fire, this somewhat busy lady came up to him and, gazing into his face, said, "You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee." Peter made a kind of evasive answer. There was a sort of subterfuge in it—"I know not what you are saying." As much as if he had said, "I do not understand you." This was really a denial of Christ, but he had so worded it as to quiet his conscience to some extent—he had not positively, in so many words, denied his Master. He was trying to do a little dodging, as some people nowadays do, and he thought, perhaps, that he might be able to draw back from the position into which he had been led by his curiosity. There was no oath the first time, no cursing—but a simple evasive answer—really, in God's sight, a denial of his Lord, yet not so pronounced as it afterwards became.

The second time, he seems to have got up from where he sat by the fire. He was evidently not comfortable there and he had gone out to the porch, a good way off from the rest. And then, still wanting to see the end of the matter, he had come back. He did not press his way into the inner circle around the fire, and sit there, but he stood and leaned forward just to warm his hands. And then it was that this woman, noticing how restless he had been, came up with a companion of hers

and, looking at him, began to say to the other woman, "I know that he is one of them, I am sure that he is." And then she and the other both broke out saying, "You were with Him! We are sure you were with Him." And the men joined in the cry, perhaps most of them said, "Oh, yes, he is one of them!" And then Peter "denied with an oath, I do not know the Man." Oh, how dreadful for him to call Christ, "the Man," when he had boldly declared that He was the Son of God! What a terrible fall was this!

After this, Peter gets up and goes away from the fire altogether. It is a large place, so he still keeps within the enclosure, but he gets up into a corner where the light does not fall upon him. And there he remains for about an hour, not very easy, you may be sure. At last, he begins to talk to those around him. He thought that they would not find him out, now, because the firelight did not reach so far, but he did not remember that his tongue would tell tales, for those near him said, "Listen! That fellow has the accent of Galilee! He is a Galilean and all the people who were with Jesus were Galileans. Depend upon it, he is one of them! We are sure that he is, for his speech betrays him." The accent of his countrified speech showed Peter up as being one of the fishers from the Lake of Galilee—so now they come all around him and they said to him, "We know that you are a disciple of Jesus." Then there was the High Priest's servant, whose kinsman's ear Peter had cut off—he said, "Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? I carried a lantern and I know that you are the man that chopped my relation's ear off. I am sure that you are!" Then Peter, worst of all, not only denied his Master, but, as if he knew that a true Christian would not swear and, therefore, the way to prove that he was no Christian was to curse and swear, therefore he did it! He cursed and swore to convince them that he was not a disciple of Jesus Christ. Oh, but this was dreadful! This was terrible! No excuse is given for Peter in God's Word, nor will we try to think of any, but we will, each one of us, pray, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe."

There is another aggravation of Peter's sin which I must mention, that is that all this was done very close to where his Lord and Master was suffering at that time. I think that this Tabernacle might very well picture the kind of place that palace was. Take away those galleries and leave this upper portion—here is Christ, with the High Priests and all the rest of them, in this upper part. Perhaps it was not so much raised above the rest of the hall as this platform is, but, still, it was a raised place. And there were the servants sitting down below where they could see everything, and also be seen, in the open square with a big fire blazing up in the midst—sending its volumes of smoke up to the midnight sky. And there is the Christ, His back turned towards Peter, but He is within hearing. Oh, I think that fact alone ought to have checked Peter's tongue and inspired him with such love, pity and sympathy that he would have found it impossible to deny his Master. And for you and me to sin in the very Presence of the Majesty of Heaven, (and all sin does that), is an enormous crime.

What was the reason why Peter thus sinned? I answer, first, that it was because of his fear of man. Bold Peter became a raving coward! And, ah, how many have denied their Master because they have been afraid of a jest or a jeer! It was but a silly maid and another gossip with her, and a few idle women and men around the outdoor fire, but Peter was afraid of them and, therefore, he was not afraid to deny his Master.

Perhaps the chief reason for Peter's denial of his Lord was his confidence in himself. If Peter had felt himself to be weaker, he would really have been stronger. But, because he felt so strong in

himself, he therefore proved to be weak as water and so denied his Master.

We know, also, that it was caused by a lack of watchfulness and prayer on the part of Peter. He was off his guard when he was sitting or standing comfortably by the fire and, therefore, he fell so sadly. His fall was caused, I expect, by a general lack of steadfastness in his character. He was impetuous, impulsive, quick, ready, brave, courageous, but, at the same time, he lacked backbone. He did, even after this, lack that essential element of a strong character, for Paul had to "withstand him to the face, because he was to be blamed." But, in this time of testing, he manifested a sad lack of solidity of character. He was carried away by surrounding circumstances and even when they happened to be against his Lord and Master, he was still carried away with them! Those of you who have abundance of life in you, and plenty of force of character, must make sure that you also have the force of Grace, lest your vivacity—the very thing which makes you to be leaders among us—should become your ruin in the time of trial! He is well kept whom God keeps and he it is also who, with prayer and watchfulness, guards himself against all the dangers that surround him. Thus I have tried to describe to you Peter's fall.

II. Now, secondly, notice THE MEANS OF PETER'S RECOVERY. They are worth notice.

The first means was, the crowing of the cock. It seemed strange that it should crow, the first time, before the period that was known among the Jews as "the cock-crowing." That happened after Peter had denied his Master once, but he does not appear to have taken any notice of it, for he afterwards denied his Master again and yet again. And just as he was speaking the third time, while the words were in his mouth, shrill and clear over that palace wall came the clarion of the cock. Oh, that crow must have gone home to Peter's heart! We cannot preach half such impressive sermons as that bird then delivered, for its message forced its way into Peter's conscience! God has many ways of reaching man's conscience. I have known Him touch the conscience by very singular means—very frequently by the observation of a little child—by the sudden death of a neighbor or a friend—even by some sentence in a newspaper. There are many birds that God can cause to crow when He bids them, and they startle the sinner as much as that one in Jerusalem startled Peter! But that was not enough, nor was it half enough to bring him to repentance.

The next thing that touched Peter, and the main thing, was the look of Christ. It is not possible for any of us to give such a look as that. It was such a look as Jehovah gave to the primeval darkness when He said, "Let there be light," and the darkness was dissipated by one glance of Jehovah's eyes. So the darkness, which the devil had cast over Peter's soul, was made to fly by one flash from the eyes of Jesus! There were volumes of meaning in that look. "Is that Peter, who declared that he would never deny Me? Remember, Peter, what I said, and what you answered—and see which of us turns out to be right." That look also said to Peter, "All these griefs and all this shame that I am enduring do not pierce Me so keenly to the heart as your denial does." Yet was it not also a look of inexpressible tenderness, as if the Master said by it, "I still love you, Peter, so come back to Me and I will yet restore you!" I think it was a heartpiercing look and a heart-healing look all in one—a look which revealed to Peter the blackness of his sin and also the tenderness of his Master's heart towards him. That look did the work—that was the great means of Peter's recovery. First, the crowing of the cock, or something in Providence, and then the look of Christ, or something of Grace.

Then, what came in next was Peter's remembrance of Christ's words, for that look awakened his memory and his memory reminded him of all that his Master had said to him—and of all the happy fellowship he had had with the dear Master and what wonders he had seen Him do. I daresay that Peter remembered how he had once walked upon the water and how he began to sink until Jesus stretched out His hand to save him. At any rate, memory did its work, for, "Peter called to mind the words that Jesus said unto him, Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And when he thought about it, he wept." So those three things co-operated in producing Peter's recovery.

But there was one thing, at the back of all these, which we must never forget—that is, the prayer of Christ for Peter. He said to him, "I have prayed for you," and the effect of that prayer was made apparent in the Apostle's restoration. That look was effectual upon Peter because the Lord Jesus had, in private, made prevalent intercession for him. So his faith was not to fail him and he was to come out of the devil's sieve with not one particle of the genuine wheat that was in him, fallen to the ground, but only the chaff taken away! That was the great means which Christ used for Peter's recovery and I beg you, dear Friends, to emulate your Savior's example in this respect. Pray for the fallen, look lovingly and pitifully upon the fallen, for your very look may do them good. Speak to the fallen, seek to guide the fallen back to Christ and who knows how many of them you may be helped to restore? III. Now, in the third place, I am to speak very briefly upon THE SIGNS OF PETER'S RESTORATION. What are those signs?

First, he went out. There was something suggestive in that action of his. It might be very cold outside, but Peter left the warmth of the fire. His heart was hot within him, so he could stand the cold and, therefore, he went out. It is always a sign of repentance in Christians who have fallen when they leave the company where they were led astray. If any of you were once professors of the faith and you have turned aside through the evil associations that you have formed, cut yourselves loose from those associations at once! "Oh," someone says, "but I might be a loser if I were to do so." You cannot lose as much as you will if you lose your soul! "Oh, but I do not see how I can escape." You must find a way of escape somehow—you must do as Lot did. Though he had all his wealth in Sodom, he had to flee from it—and the message to you professors who are among the ungodly is, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Thus Peter went out and it was a wise thing for him to do.

He not only went out, but he wept. As he kept on turning over his sin, it appeared to him in all its blackest hue. We are told that he wept bitterly. Convulsive weeping came upon him—he could not stand himself—his very heart seemed as if it would flow away in rivers of repentant tears.

It is a blessed sign of the work of Grace in the soul when the man who has sinned quits his evil companions and mourns over his sin as one who is in bitterness for his first-born. If any of you have sinned like Peter, go and weep like Peter. If you have fallen like Peter, then let your soul bitterly bewail your transgression. Many talk about the greatness of David's sin, but if they knew the depths of David's repentance and the heartbreak that came with it, they would not so glibly speak of it. There is a tradition that Peter never heard a cock crow, or thought of this incident, as long as he lived, without weeping. And although that is only a tradition, I can well believe it was the case, for that is just what would be likely to happen to a true penitent.

IV. Now I close with A FEW GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE INCIDENT.

My first remark is—Christian, it is bad for you to be in evil company. It was bad for Peter to be among those who were standing or sitting round that fire. On a cold night everyone likes a nice comfortable fire. Yes, but you had better suffer discomfort and inconvenience rather than associate with wicked men. Peter was sitting in the seat of the scorner, so we do not wonder that, at last, he used the scorner's language! Keep out of evil company if you possibly can. If you are obliged to go where bad language is used, do just as you do when you have to go out in a shower of rain— carry an umbrella to shield you from the rain and go through it as quickly as you can. When, in your daily calling, you have to mix with ungodly men, carry the spirit of watchfulness and prayer with you—and slip away from their society as quickly as you can.

My next remark is that it is idle for a true disciple to try to disown his discipleship. Peter says, "I am not one of Christ's disciples," but, even by the firelight, he looks like one of them. He swears that he is not and gets away up in the corner where there is no light. But, as soon as he begins talking, they say, "You are one of them!" His very speech causes him to be discovered—and if you are a genuine Christian, you can no more hide yourself than can the violet in the grass, whose perfume tells the passerby that it is there! There is something about you which will cause people to find you out. I should recommend those of you who have believed in Christ, but have not joined the Church, or made a confession of your faith, to do so speedily because, whether you do so or not, the ungodly will be down upon you! When once Christ sets the mark of His Cross upon your forehead, all sorts of people will see it and they will say, "You are one of Christ's followers! Your very speech betrays you. There is something about you that is different from the rest of us, and which tells us that you have been with Jesus." Do not try to hide this distinguishing mark if you have it—and even if you do, you will not be able to do so.

The next general remark is—when you have to depict your own character, always use the black pencil. Never try to extenuate anything. We shall never have any biographies, written by uninspired men, after the fashion of these Bible biographies. I am sure that if Peter had been the minister of a neighboring Baptist Church and had died, and I had been asked to write his biography, I should not have mentioned his denial of his Lord. Or if I had done so, I would have had his wife down on me if she was alive! And, if not, all the members of the congregation would have said, "What a shame it was to say anything about that matter after the man was dead! Mr. Spurgeon has written a brother-minister's biography and he has put in all the details of that sad incident which ought to have been suppressed." Very likely it ought to be, but it never is suppressed in the Bible narratives—we get all that happens recorded there. When Mark wrote, as we believe, under the guidance of Peter, he did not keep back anything, but put all down as black as it really was!

But, next, when you are writing of a Brother's character, try to describe it as fairly as possible, for that is what John does in his description of Peter's fall. It is very mildly drawn compared with Peter's own account of it. We must never say what is false, but when there has been something that is wrong, let us always put the kindest construction we possibly can upon it. There are always two ways of telling a tale and they may both be true. The one is to lay heavy stress upon all the faults. The other is to do as John does—to mention them, but to say no more about them than he feels really obliged to say. Let us be truthful, but let it never seem as if we had any grudge against the wrongdoer. The sacred writers often teach us this lesson and here, Peter gives the worst account of himself, and John gives a more favorable report concerning his erring Brother.

Another remark I have to make is—observe the power that is in people's eyes. You must often have noticed this. What a power there was in that maid's eyes when she gazed earnestly upon Peter! It was that earnest gaze of the girl that made Peter deny his Master. But, then, see the power for good that there was in Christ's eyes. "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." Eyes can say far more than lips can! Often there is more heart-affecting eloquence in the eyes than there is in the tongue. Sometimes you Christian people, members of the Church, may be by the side of a man who utters a wrong word—but you need not tell him of it—just look at him, that will be enough. If an ungodly man shall even swear in your presence, do not give him a supercilious look, as much as to say, "O you wicked sinner, to do such a thing in the presence of such a holy man as I am!" But there is another kind of look, as if you felt so grieved and were amazed that he could so take in vain the name of the ever-blessed God—that is the sort of look to give him. If the Lord will manage your eyes for you, you will find that they will be potent messengers of love for Him. God give you to have those sanctified eyes which can work wonders for Him!

My last remark is this—what a mercy it was that Christ did not treat Peter as Peter treated Him! Peter said, "I know not the Man." Ah, me, but if the blessed, meek and lowly One had said, "I know not the man," it would have been all over with Peter! May God grant that Christ may not say of anyone of us, at the Last Great Day, "I know not the man"! He will say it of all who know Him not, and whom He does not know—they are not acquainted with one another—and if they continue as they are, He will say, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Though He has eaten and drunk in your presence and taught in your streets, yet will He say, "I know you not. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." The mercy is that He never said that to Peter. And He will never say that to you, or to me if we come and cast ourselves in penitence at His feet, bemoaning our sin, and putting our trust in Him alone! May God grant this blessing to each one of you, dear Friends for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Matthew 26:31-35; Matthew 26:57-58; Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:53-54; Mark 14:66-72;

Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18; John 18:25-27.

The story of Peter's denial of his Master is recorded in all four of the

Gospels. There are some differences of expression in each version, so it will not be repetitious if we read all four of them. And if we read them attentively, we shall get a clear view of the whole incident.

Matthew 26:31-33. Then Jesus said unto them, All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended. This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence which it displayed, but also because it was a flat contradiction of what the Master had just said. "All you shall be offended because of Me this night." Peter thought he knew better than Christ did, so he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended."

34. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this night, before the cock crow—The cock-crowing was a recognized mark of time; it was just before the rising of the sun. "This night, before the rooster crows"— 34, 35. You shall deny Me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You. Here, again, he contradicts his Master straight to His face!

35. Likewise also said all the disciples. 57, 58. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caia

phas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

69-75. Now Peter sat outside in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, You also were with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what you say. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the Man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely you also are one of them; for your speech betrays you. Then he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew. Then Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly. Now let us read Mark's account, which will especially interest you if you remember that, probably, Mark wrote under the direction of Peter and, no doubt, received many of his facts from Peter. You will notice how severe is this description of the whole scene—it is just such an one as the chief actor in it would be sure to give as he recalled his fall and restoration.

Mark 14:53-54. And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. Then Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. Thus we learn what a cold night it was—that night in which the Savior's "sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Often, at Jerusalem, the days are extremely hot, yet the nights are as cold as if it were winter through the abundant dews that fall and cause a dampness everywhere.

66, 67. And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there came one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him. I think I see her, with her eyes fixed upon him, as he was warming himself at the fire: "She looked upon him."

67, 68. And said, And you also were with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what you say. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. This first time was not the regular time of cock-crowing, but those birds crow when they please. Before the fixed period called the cock-crow, Peter was to deny his Master three times—this was the first time.

69, 70. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely you are one of them: for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it. "You have the peculiar brogue of that part of the country. 'You are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.'" 71, 72. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom you speak. And the second time the cock crew. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crows twice, you will

deny Me three times. And when he thought about it, he wept. He does not say that he went out and wept bitterly, as Luke says in his version of the incident.

This is Peter's own account of it, so he says as little as he can to his own credit, while he tells all that is to his discredit. You notice that there seem to be some slight differences between these two accounts and it is quite natural that it should be so. If any two honest men here were to describe any scene that they had witnessed, the two would be sure to differ in some particulars, yet both accounts might be true. Matthew tells us that Jesus said to Peter, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times," but Mark tells us that He said, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." Yes, but there is no real contradiction, and the incident introduced by Mark shows how, to the very letter, both of those utterances of our Savior were fulfilled, So is it with regard to those who spoke to Peter. When we come to another account, you will see that they differ very considerably, yet they are all true, for all that.

Luke 22:54-56. Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. Then Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire. The flickering light helped to reveal his features to this maid "as he sat by the fire."

56-58. And earnestly looked upon him and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him and said, You are also of them. Then Peter said, Man, I am not. Both Matthew and Mark say that it was a maid, and another maid who spoke to Peter. And now Luke mentions a man—but there is no reason why all three of them could not have united in bringing this charge. One maid began the accusation, and the others joined with her, so the whole story is correct.

59-61. And about the space of one hour later another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. Then Peter said, Man, I do not know what you are saying. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. The Savior had been standing in the upper part of the room which was, probably, roofed over, while Peter and the rest were down below in the courtyard, which was open to the sky and, therefore, they needed a fire to warm them. Jesus had been standing before His judge, but all of a sudden, as the cock crew, He "turned and looked at Peter."

61. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the cock crow, you will deny Me three times. That cockcrowing had come at the very moment Christ had foretold, for Peter had already denied his Master thrice.

62. So Peter went out and wept bitterly. Now hear what John has to say about this matter. He wrote after the other three Evangelists and he generally supplies their deficiencies. He it is who tells us how Simon Peter got into the hall.

John 18:16. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. You know who that was, for John always hides his own name as much as possible.

15, 16. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then went out that other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, and spoke unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. No doubt she

had a lamp in her hand, that she might watch the features of those who were admitted. So, when Peter came in, she had a good view of his face and, afterwards, when he was at the fire, this is the woman who went and showed him up.

17. Then the damsel that kept the door said unto Peter, Are not you also one of this Man's disciples? She evidently knew that John was one of them, so she put this question to Peter, "Are not you also one of this Man's disciples?"

17, 18. He said, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. Matthew tells us that, at first, he sat with them, but now he is standing, as though he was uneasy, or going out and coming in again. And now he is questioned again.

25-27. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Are not you also one of His disciples? He denied it and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew. John does not say anything about Peter's oath, or about his cursing because that had been told by the others, and John had no desire to write anything that would reflect upon Peter. Indeed, he tells us that it was he who went and spoke to the maid that let Peter in—he seems as if he wished us to know that he had been the means of introducing Peter to the place of temptation! And it is interesting to remember that he was the man who was with Peter on the morning of the Resurrection, so that no doubt he had been the first to find him after his fall.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 22,63-65 #2825 - Majesty in Misery

MAJESTY IN MISERY

NO. 2825

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1883.

"And the men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him. And when

they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked

Him saying, Prophesy, who is it that struck You? And many

other things they blasphemously spoke against Him."

Luke 22:63-65.

I SUPPOSE that all this cruelty took place while our Lord was before

Caiaphas, in the dead of night, before the Sanhedrim had been fully gathered together to hold their trial at daybreak. His enemies were in so great a hurry to condemn Him that as soon as He arrived at the high priest's house, they had a kind of preliminary examination that they might try the tack upon which they meant to sail in endeavoring to procure a conviction against Him. Thus, after He had been, in an informal and illegal way, condemned without any proper trial, they left Him in the custody of their officers until early in the morning when they summoned the rest of their companions, so as to go through again the farce of trying Him whom they knew to be innocent.

While these officials had Christ in their keeping, they might at least have left Him in peace and quietness. According to the rules of all civilized nations, a prisoner detained in custody should be guarded from insult and ill-treatment while in that condition. Whatever his ultimate punishment may be after he has been tried and found guilty, while he is as yet uncondemned, he is reckoned to be under the protection of the State that has arrested him—and he ought not to be subjected to insult or injury. But here, as if they had been so many savages, the judges of our Lord abandoned Him to those outcasts whom they employed to do their foul work—and those wretched creatures treated Him with mingled cruelty and scorn—"The men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him." Could they not have allowed Him a little time of rest? The traces of the bloody sweat must still have been upon Him. They could see, by the emaciation of His Person, that He was, as it had been long before foretold that He would be, "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He

must already have been ready to faint under the rough usage which had been meted out to Him both before and at His preliminary trials before Annas and Caiaphas. His tormentors must have seen how exhausted He was, yet they had no pity for Him in their hard, unfeeling hearts! They al

Volume 49 1lowed Him no respite and gave Him no opportunity to prepare Himself to answer the charges that were about to be brought against Him. There were none found to vindicate His Character, or to plead His cause—and the intervals between the informal and the more formal trials were spent in mockery and in scorn.

These men were gross cowards. I am sure that they must have been because they were so cruel, for cruelty is one of the badges of cowardice wherever you find it. These are the very men who, in the garden, "went backward, and fell to the ground," when Christ did but say, "I am He," in answer to their declaration that they were seeking "Jesus of Nazareth." They went out, with swords and staves, to take Him prisoner, yet they fell to the ground when He did but speak a word or two to them! But now that they had Him in their power and perceived that He was, apparently, not inclined to exert the Divine energy with which He was endowed, but that He was as submissive as a sheep before her shearers, they determined to be as cruel as they could be to Him. God grant that the sin of cruelty to anything that lives may never be justly laid to the charge of any one of us! If you have acted cruelly, even though it is to the meanest thing in creation, despise yourself, for you are of a lower order than the creature that you tortured! And if these men could have judged themselves aright, they would have despised themselves. They seem to me to have been the very meanest of mankind who, having such a gentle Sufferer in their power, instead of showing any humanity to Him, seemed as if they could not sufficiently abuse Him. And so they indulged their vile nature to the utmost in mocking and persecuting Him.

I. I hope that some spiritual profit may come to us while we are considering this terrible part of the suffering of our Lord. And, first, I want you, in imagination, to, gaze upon MAJESTY IN MISERY.

There stands Jesus of Nazareth. I will not attempt to picture Him. There has never yet been a painter who could portray the lineaments of that wondrous face! The highest art has never yet been able to satisfy itself upon that point even though it has borrowed its outline and its colors from the Scriptures themselves. The most skillful hand grows unsteady in the Presence of One so glorious in His griefs. I will not, therefore, attempt to draw a portrait of my Lord and Master, but will simply ask you, by faith, to behold Him, clothed with the garment that was without seam, bound, delivered over to the officers and surrounded by them while they mocked and scoffed at Him. Letting your eyes rest upon Him in a loving look, regarding Him as the great center of your heart's affection, what do you see—you who believe in His Deity—and who can say that He is "very God of very God" to you?

If your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, you will see Omnipotence held captive. "The men that held Jesus" did not really know who He was. He appeared to them to be a poor Galilean peasant. Speaking the country brogue, they saw that He was a humble, lowly, emaciated Man and, as He had been committed to their charge, they held Him as their prisoner. But they did not recognize that He was the Almighty God, the very Deity that created the heavens and the earth, for, "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." He was, at that very moment, "upholding all things by the word of His power" and, amid all His weakness, and in all His sufferings, He was still "over all, God blessed forever," whom all the holy

angels continued to adore. Is it not a great mystery that Omnipotence should thus be held captive? What a marvelous thing it is that He who can create or who can destroy, according to the good pleasure of His own will, should take upon Himself our nature and in that Nature should sink so low as to become subject even to the very coarsest and most cruel of mankind! What a wondrous stoop of condescension is here! Omnipotence allows itself to be bound and never proves itself more truly Omnipotent than when it restrains itself and permits itself to be held as a prisoner by sinful men!

Look again at this Majesty in misery and you will see glory mocked, for "the men that held Jesus mocked Him." To them He seemed to be a fit subject for ridicule and derision in professing to be a king, when He had neither an armed host nor multitudes of followers who could hope to stand for a single second against the mighty Caesar who held Israel in bondage! Yes, but there was a Glory in Christ which He had deigned to veil and to conceal for a while, but which angels still beheld and adored— yet these men were mocking Him! There are some themes which seem to strike a speaker dumb and this subject has something like this effect upon me. It appears to me amazing that the God who had reigned in Glory over myriads of holy angels, should be mocked by miscreants who could not even have lived an instant longer in His Presence if He had not permitted them to do so! Yet I see, in my text that He who made the heavens and the earth stood there to be despised and rejected of men and to be treated with the utmost contumely and scorn. I can make that statement, but you cannot realize what it means. This is one of those great mysteries of the faith that seem to stagger you. You believe it without the slightest hesitation, yet, the more you try to really grasp and comprehend it, the more it seems to elude you and to tower above you!

Thus, we see Omnipotence held captive and Glory mocked. Next, we see Goodness smitten—perfect, infinite, unutterable Good

ness stricken, bruised, assailed, assaulted—"The men that held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him." To strike wickedness is an act of justice. And even to lift the sword against oppression may not always be a thing to be condemned. But to strike Him who never did any man a wrong, but who has done all men some measure of good and who has given to some men all conceivable good—ah, this is indeed brutish! The blessed Son of God who stood there, had within His soul that mercy which endures forever, yet they struck Him—there burned in His heart a love which many waters could not quench and which the floods could not drown, yet they struck Him! He had come here upon no errand of vengeance, but to bring peace and goodwill to men—and to set up a Kingdom of joy and love—yet they bound Him! Ah, me, it is amazing that Goodness should be so good as to submit to this shameful indignity! None but Divine Goodness would have submitted to it.

See what these mockers and smiters did next to our Lord. They produced a handkerchief, or a cloth of some kind, and they put it over His eyes. Omniscience must seem to be blinded, which, in truth, it cannot be. Yet, in the Christ there was the Omniscience of the Godhead and, to the utmost of their power, these men blinded Him in the hope that He might not see what they were doing. I know some who are trying to act that way at this present time. The only god that they have is a blind god. They believe in what they call, "the forces of nature," and then they condescendingly talk as though God was only the aggregate of the forces of nature working according to certain

mechanical laws that can never be altered. The god in whom they profess to believe is a god that does not see. They tell us that it is idle to pray, or to think that God takes any interest in such insignificant individuals as we are. Ah, I remember reading about those gods of the philosophers—"They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusts in them." "But our God is in the heavens," seeing all that happens and doing as He pleases among the hosts above and among men below. He is not now to be blindfolded, as He was once, when He condescended to wear our nature and to bear our sin. Yet it is amazing that He should ever have permitted this indignity to be put upon Him. The spouse in the Canticles truly sings, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set"—exceeding the very stars of Heaven for brightness—yet they covered them over! His eyes flamed with love and in them there did gleam bright diamonds of pity for all the sorrows of mankind—yet those cruel men did hide those precious eyes of His, blindfolding the Christ of God!

Now, surely, they had made Him suffer enough, far too much—yet again the infinite beauties of His blessed Countenance were to be marred, for "they struck Him on the face." "Oh, but had we been there," we say, "our indignation would have burned against them for striking that dear face!" Yet we had need lay aside our indignation and bring forward penitence, instead, for we, also, have sometimes struck that dear face of Jesus, which is as the Sun of Heaven, far brighter than the sun which lights up the world! All other beauties put together cannot equal the marvelous charms of that Countenance which was marred more than any man's. There is nothing under Heaven, or in Heaven, itself, that can rival the face of the Well-Beloved, yet these men struck it! I think an angel might well shiver with horror if, for the first time, he heard that men had struck the face of His Lord! It was but His Human face, it is true, but therein they struck at all of Deity that they could reach. It was man striking God in the face! A slap in the face of Deity was what it really meant. Ah, me, that my Master should ever have had to endure such insult and pain—that He should ever have been willing to suffer such indignity as this—was there ever love like unto His?

Then the mockers said, "Prophesy, who is it that struck You!" That was Justice defied. They seemed to say to our Lord, as they struck Him, "Tell us what our name is; say who struck that blow. You cannot resist it. You cannot avenge Yourself, but, at least, see if You can tell the name of him that struck You. We defy You to do it." Ah, He had written down their names and they will find out, one day, that He knows them all, for there are none who strike the Savior who will not have their blows come back upon themselves unless they repent of their sin! There was Justice defied, as "they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that struck You?"

I say again that I am not worthily able to speak on such a theme as this. And I think I never shall be, however long I may live. It is not within the compass of lips of clay, with words of air, to describe the condescending sufferings of Him who, though He was rightly called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," nevertheless stooped so low as to be mocked, struck, blindfolded, and struck again for your sakes and mine—

"Vexed, I try and try again, Still my efforts are all in vain— Living tongues are dumb at best, We must die to speak of Christ."

The wonder of this Majesty in misery can be described in four words. The first wonder is that, under all this torture, our Lord was so patient. Not a flush of anger appeared on His cheek, not a flash of wrath from His eyes. He bore it all, bore it in His very soul, with Diving Patience, the very patience of "the God of Patience."

The next wonder is that He was silent under all this cruelty—not a word did He utter either in complaint or in condemnation of His assailants. This proved His true greatness. Eloquence is easy compared with silence and, perhaps, it would not have been true of Christ that "never man spoke like this Man," if it had not also been true of Him that never man was silent like this Man. He fulfilled to the letter the ancient prophecy, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." Lord, teach us how to imitate Your patience and Your silence!

Notice, in the third place, how eloquent He was by that very silence. He said more for us, and more to us, by holding His tongue than if He had delivered Himself of many burning sentences. It is matchless eloquence that is seen in the calm serenity of Christ in the presence of these cruel persecutors, in the forgiving Character of Christ under the most exasperating circumstances and in the patience of Christ under unparalleled sufferings!

And yet again, I see something so triumphant in our Savior's griefs that, while I call Him patient, silent, and eloquent, I must also call Him victorious. His persecutors could not make Him give way to anger. They could not destroy His mercy. They could not slay His love. They could not cause Him to think of Himself. They could not make Him declare that He would go no further with His work of saving sinners, now that men began to scoff at Him, strike Him and despitefully use Him. No, the strongsouled Christ still perseveres in His merciful work, even as a mighty hunter pursues his game upon the mountain, leaping from crag to crag and cliff to cliff, defying danger and death that he may secure the creature on whose track he has gone. So, O mighty Christ, You did accomplish Your glorious purpose of love and mercy! You did lead captivity captive by suffering, to the bitter end, all that was inflicted upon You, even unto the death of the Cross!

Thus have I tried to picture Majesty in misery, but I have not been able to describe either Christ's Majesty or His misery as they deserve to be described. Meditate on them and pray the Spirit of God to give you such a sight of them as human nature, by itself, can never afford you!

II. Now I pass on to notice, secondly, that my text seems to me to show us SIN AT ITS SPORT.

All this sad scene represents what sin did when it had the opportunity—when all restraining bands were loosed and it could act according to its own evil will. It also represents what sin is still doing, as far as it can, and what would always be the action of sin if it were not hindered by the almighty power of God.

What, then, does sin do in the hour of its liberty? I invite you to notice, first—and to pay particular attention to any part that may come home to yourself—the levity of sin. These men are grossly insulting the Christ of God, but, to them, it is a sport, a game. They play at blindfolding Him—it is simply mirth and amusement to them. Sad, indeed, is it that sin should ever be what men call

sport, yet I need scarcely remind you how often it is so, even now, to many. They run after it with the utmost eagerness and they call it pleasure—they call that which is provoking God pleasure—they call that which crucified Christ pleasure! They say that "they must see life," and they call that, "life," which forced from Jesus a bloody sweat and which afterwards dragged Him to a cruel death! And, alas, they say of many a sin, "What a delight it is to us! Would you make our life miserable by taking away our enjoyments?" So it becomes a matter of enjoyment to them to strike Christ on the face and to mock Him! Perhaps I am addressing some who have even made the Bible into a jestbook—their puns and mirth have been pointed with passages of Holy Writ. Possibly others have made rare fun out of some venerable Christian, some faithful servant of the living and true God. Well, Sirs, if you have done so, I would have you know how heinous is your sin in thus making sport of the godly—such "sport" as that, unless you repent of it, will damn you forever! As surely as you live, it will shut you out from the great Father's love and close the door of Mercy against you, world without end! Yet that is how sin acts when it has its liberty. Yes, and it sports even with the wounds of a Crucified God! Alas, that it should ever do so!

Notice, next, the utter wantonness of sin. If these men really wanted to get amusement out of Christ, they were able to get it, but what need was there for them to also strike Him? What need was there of all that superfluity of cruelty by which they put Him to such shame and pain? If Christ must die, at least let Him die in peace—why that spitting in His face, that terrible scourging, that awful aggravation of His griefs? It was because men will sin out of sheer wantonness! I have known some persons sin in such strange ways that I have wondered why they did it. It was not for pleasure—at least I could not see any pleasure in it. It caused the man's own family to be utterly miserable and brought them and himself, too, down to poverty—what mirth or merriment could there be in that? There are some who seem as if they could never be happy unless they were engaged in making themselves unhappy forever and ever. They are not content without committing some extravagance in sin and making their whole lives an outrageous series of rebellions against God. If any of you have ever been guilty of such wantonness in sin, may the Holy Spirit cause a gracious influence to steal over you so that you will no longer grieve the Christ of God, but will, yourself, grieve that you should ever have sinned so shamefully against Him!

Then note, next, the cruelty of sin. I have already asked and I repeat the question—What need was there for these men to strike the Savior? What pleasure could they derive from all the pain they caused Him? By the mouth of His ancient Prophets, the Lord said, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" It was in their own interests that He thus pleaded with men, for He would not have them injure themselves—and sin is always self-injury—it is a sort of suicide. Whenever a man does wrong, mischief must certainly come of it, and God knows this, so He beseeches men not to act so foolishly. And, oh, when a man mocks at true religion, rejects Christ and postpones the day of repentance, He is piercing again that dear heart that bled for the unworthy, and grieving that blessed Spirit who still strives with the sons of men, though He is often vexed and grievously provoked by them. Why are you so unkind to your God? Surely, there can be no necessity for committing such a sin as this!

Then, observe the desperate unbelief that there often is in sin. These men would not have blindfolded Christ if they had really believed Him to be the Son of God. They acted as they did because they had no faith whatever in Him. This is the great evil that lies at the root of most men's sins—they believe not in Jesus Christ whom God has sent. It is this of which the Spirit of God

convinces men, as our Savior foretold concerning Him—"He will convince the world of sin...because they believe not on Me." Yet there is nothing more reasonable, nothing more worthy to be believed, than the Revelation of God as given to us in the Holy Scriptures! A man has only to test and try for himself whether it is true, or not, and he shall soon have the proof of its verity in his own bosom. Let him really believe it and then see whether it does not make him both holy and happy—that shall be to him the test of its truth.

Notice, again, how often there is in sin a kind of defiance of God. If a boy were to come to his father and were to say to him, "I will do all manner of rude and unkind things to you, yet you will not chastise me," it would not be long before that father would make his son smart if he were, himself, worthy to be a father! But sinners act towards God in that kind of way. They often do to God what these persecutors did to Christ, as far as they can. They mock Him, strike Him and defy Him. Am I addressing anyone who has ever called down upon himself the curse of God? Beware lest that blasphemous prayer of yours be answered the next time you utter it, for it is God's way to answer prayer and, perhaps, He will answer yours—and then where will you be? Some have even dared to defy God thus—"Well, even if it is as you say, I am willing to take my chances—I will not submit to God." Ah, Sir, Pharaoh tried that plan and he repented of it, I think, when it was too late! In the midst of the Red Sea, when the waters began to overwhelm him and all his mighty host, then he learned what were the consequences of saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Every sin has in it a measure of defiance of God—it is like these men striking Christ upon the face and saying to Him—"Prophesy, who is it that struck You?"

I will not linger longer upon this part of my theme except just to say that there is one more thing about sin that is peculiarly lamentable, namely, the multiplicity of sin. Read the 65th verse—"And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him." One thing, two things, 20 things will not content them—they must say "many other things" against Him! When a man once gives himself up to sin, it is like getting into a current which bears him onward where, at first, he had no thought of going. If you wade into the waters of sin, it will not be long that you will be able to retain a foothold and, by-and-by, unless the Lord shall, in His Grace, prevent such a calamity, the rapid current will bear you away to your everlasting destruction! It is no use for you to say, "This far will I go in sin, but no farther." You cannot stop when you please—if you once commit yourself to the influence of sin, you know not where it will carry you. Alas, alas, some men seem as if they never could sin enough to satisfy themselves! They multiply their transgressions beyond all count. Every iron of iniquity that they have is thrust into the fire. Both hands are diligently engaged in doing mischief. Sometimes they rise up early, but, more often, they sit up late—possibly all through the night, that they may waste the more precious hours in their wickedness! So God is grieved and Christ is wounded afresh by the sin of man. It is a sad, sad picture. I cast a veil over it and turn to something brighter and better.

III. We have seen Majesty in misery, and sin at its sport. Now, thirdly, let us see LOVE AT ITS LABOR.

All that shame and suffering was endured by our Savior for love of each of us who can truly say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." All this blindfolding, mocking, and striking was borne by Christ for your sake, Beloved, and mine. I will not try to describe it further, but I will ask you to just spend a minute or two in trying to realize that sad scene. For you—as much as if there were no

other person in the whole universe—for you the King of Glory became the King of Scorn and bore all this despising and rejection of men! For you, John. For you, Mary. For you, old friend. For you, in your youth. If you, whoever you are, believe in Him, He was your Substitute. Your faith gives you the assurance that He was enduring all this for you—for you, I say, as much as if He had no other redeemed one, but had paid the ransom price all for you. Less than this would not have sufficed for you, though it is, indeed, sufficient for all the innumerable host redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus!

Let us, then, see love at its labor. I mean, our love to our Lord, though I might also speak of our Lord's love to us, and what it did for us. What shall our love do to show how grateful we are to Jesus for all that He endured for us? Well, first, let it set penitence to confess. Come, my Heart, here is room for the display of your grief. Why was Christ mocked in Jerusalem? Surely it was because you have mocked God with prayers that were no prayers, with hymns carelessly sung, with Scripture read as if they were merely the writings of men, with professions of religion that were hollow and empty! Brothers and Sisters, have you not some of these things to repent of? If you have mocked Him thus, the mocking that He endured in the hall of the high priest was on your account.

And as He was blindfolded, let us weep because our unbelief has often blindfolded Him. We imagined that He did not know about us, or that He had forgotten us. We thought that He could not see the end from the beginning and that He would not be able to bring good out of evil. Let me ask you, dear Friends—have you not often made Christ to be a blindfolded Christ so far as your apprehension of Him was concerned? If so, because you have thus blindfolded God by your unbelief, you are, by your sin, imitating the guilt of these men who literally blindfolded Christ.

And as we behold Him struck, let us again grieve as we remember how it was written of Him, "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Every sin that we have ever committed made a gory furrow upon His precious back! Those black and blue bruises that alternate upon His sacred shoulders were caused by the cruel scourging to which each of us contributed our share by our transgressions. O Beloved, weep as you see Him bearing what you ought to have borne!

And when you read that they asked Him taunting questions while His eyes were blindfolded, ask yourself, O child of God, whether you have not often done the same! Have you never asked for a sign, instead of walking by faith? I confess that I have sometimes wished that I could have some token or indication of what my Lord thought. Ah, that is what these cruel men sought from Christ—they tried to get Him to convince them that He knew them when His eyes were blinded. O Brothers and Sisters, let us never seek a sign as that wicked and adulterous generation did! Let us walk by faith, not by sight, and implicitly trust our Lord! Because we have not trusted Him as we should have done, but have demanded of Him signs and tokens, we have been too much like these men who asked Him, "Prophesy, who is it that struck You?" I said that we would see love at its labor, so I want you, next, to let your love urge faith to confide in Christ. Come, dear Friends, in all this suffering of our Savior, let us see fresh reasons for trusting ourselves more entirely in the hands of Christ. Those men held Jesus in order that neither death nor Hell might ever be able to hold us. He was held in our place, so He says concerning us, as He said concerning His disciples in the garden, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." The great Substitute is held as a

prisoner so that all for whom He stood as Surety might be set at liberty forever!

He also was mocked. And to what end? We deserve eternal shame and contempt because of our sin, but He took all that shame upon Himself and made this wonderful exchange. As He put on the rags of our shame, He said to us, "Take My glittering vesture and wear it!" And now, the Glory which He had with the Father from eternity, He has put upon His people, that they may be like He and may be with Him where He is forever and ever! What a wonderful exchange is this! As Thomas read the Deity of Christ in His wounds, so do I read the eternal glory of His people in the mockery which He endured on their behalf.

When you see your Lord struck, why is that but that there may be no striking and no wounds for you, now or forever? You shall go free, for Jesus has borne all that you deserved to bear! He bore blow after blow that not one might ever fall upon you.

Why, too, was Jesus blindfolded but that we might be able to see? Our sin had blinded us to all that was worth seeing, but His death has taken away the scales and we can now see because He was caused not to see. Because He suffered these miserable miscreants to bind His eyes, therefore are our eyes unbound, today, and they shall be yet more unbound in that day when we shall behold Him face to face and be no more parted from Him.

And why was Jesus blasphemed by the "many other things" which they falsely laid to His charge? He was blasphemed that we might be justified! He was unrighteously accused and slandered in order that we might be able to boldly say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died." Therefore, be glad, Beloved—while you sorrow over your Lord's griefs, rejoice over what those griefs have brought to you and what they will continue to bring to you throughout eternity!

Now, lastly, let our love at its labor awaken our zeal to consecration to our Lord. Was He held captive? Then come, my most burning zeal, and inflame me with devotion to His cause! Was He held thus for me? Then He shall hold me fast and never let me go! My Lord, I do surrender myself, my life, my all, to You, to be Your willing captive forever! Take these eyes, these lips, these hands, these feet, this heart—and as you were and are altogether mine, so let me be altogether Yours. Is not this a fair requital? Does any child of God object to that?

Then, next, as they despised Him, come, my Soul, what do you say to this? Why, that I will despise the world that did despise my Lord and Savior! O world, world, world, you are a blind, blear-eyed, black-hearted thing to have treated my Master so! Shall I conform to your customs? Shall I flatter you? Shall I ask for your applause? No, you are crucified to me. As a felon nailed up to the cross, so, O world, are you to me because you have crucified the Christ, the infinitely-lovely Son of God! Henceforth, the world is crucified to us and we to the world!

And as they blindfolded Jesus, what then? Why, I will be blindfolded, too! I will henceforth see no charm, no attraction anywhere but in my Lord. My eyes shall behold Him and no other in the glory that is yet to be revealed and, today, I can say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire but You." Go through the world, Beloved, blindfolded to all but Christ, and you shall do well!

And, as they struck Jesus on the face, what will you and I do to show how much we love that face which was so shamefully ill-treated? My heart brings up before me a vision of that "sacred head, once wounded," encircled by the crown of thorns—that dear face, so bruised and battered, yet even then more beautiful than all the other loveliness of Heaven besides! Jesus, Son of God, and Son of Man, we adore You and we hasten to kiss those blessed feet of Yours, in loving adoration, and we do it all the more because wicked men did strike You upon the cheek! Reverence and love we gladly give to Him who once was struck by outcasts and who afterwards was nailed to the accursed tree!

And, inasmuch as these men said "many other things blasphemously against Him," come, my Brothers, let us say many things in His praise! And, Sisters, join us in the holy exercise! No one shall close our lips, faulty as they are, from speaking in honor of our dear Lord! Sometimes, with the Prophet, we are ready to confess that we are men of unclean lips and that we dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips, but, such as we are, we will render to Him the calves of our lips and give glory to His holy name! Never be ashamed to speak up for your Lord, Beloved. Never blush to acknowledge that you belong to Him. No, if you blush at all, blush with shame that you do not love Him more and serve Him better! By the memory of that dear face, blindfolded and struck, while cruel men all around slander Him with their blasphemous accusations, I charge you to—

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus, You soldiers of the Cross!"

God help you to do so!

Oh, that some here who have never believed in Jesus Christ would now begin to trust Him! I do not invite you, just now, so much to believe in Him in His glory as to believe in Him in His shame. Was He really the Son of God and did He suffer for guilty men all that we have been talking of, and far more than that? Then I must believe in Him! To me, Jesus Christ seems to be a Character that men could never have invented. He must be historical for He is so original. Unaided human minds could never have thought out such a Character! There are strange things in Buddhism and other false religions, and men with wild imaginations have conceived curious notions concerning their gods, but I challenge anyone to show me, in any book except God's Book, anything that can parallel the story of the Eternal God, Himself, becoming Man in order to make atonement for the sins of His creatures, that is, the sins committed by them against Him. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, I must believe in Him! What is more, I must believe that He died for me—

"That on the Cross He shed His blood From sin to set me free."

Having so believed—I speak as God's witness to all who can hear me— I feel an inward peace that nothing can break, a holy joy that nothing can disturb and a sacred calm which death, itself, shall not be able to destroy. I have been at the deathbeds of many of our Brothers and Sisters who have been accustomed to worship here and who have been members of this Church. And—note this testimony, I pray you—I have never seen one of them afraid to die! I have not met with one coward among them all! But I have heard some of them singing triumphantly in their last hours, as merrily as though it were their marriage day—while others have been as calm and quiet as if to die were but to go to bed, sleep a while and wake again in the morning!

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—in this very Lord who stooped from the heights of Glory to the depths of shame and suffering—and you, also, shall find that your confidence in Him shall be

rewarded even in this life! While, as for the world to come—ah then, when there shall be no blindfolded eyes for Him—no mockery and scorn and smiting for Him—but all shall be Glory forever and ever, then you and I, if we are believers in Him, shall eternally share His Glory! God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 28

Luke 23,11 #2051 - Setting Jesus At Nothing--Treat

SETTING JESUS AT NOTHING—TREATING

HIM WITH CONTEMPT

NO. 2051

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1888,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1888.

"And Herod with his men of war set Him at nothing."

Luke 23:11.

IT is your Lord whom Herod set at nothing! Once worshipped of angels and all the heavenly host, He is treated with contempt by a ribald regiment. In Himself "the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His Person." But now set at nothing by men not worthy of the name. Soon to reassume all His former glory with the Father and to descend in infinite splendor to judge the earth in righteousness and reign as King of kings—and yet here He is set at nothing! It is a sight of horror and of shame. How could angels bear to see it? This paltry prince and his rough retinue made nothing of Him who is All in All. They treated Him as beneath their contempt.

The most contemptible flouted Him. The mean soldier in the petty army of a petty prince made unholy mirth of Heaven's high Lord and earth's Redeemer. What a sorrowful and shameless business! May we be helped to sorrow over it! These wretches were of our race. May we mourn because of Him! When the thorns of grief and repentance are at our breast, may God grant that they may act as lancets to let out the foul blood of our pride, for we, too, are partakers in this tremendous crime, since our sin involved our Savior in the necessity of bearing this barbarous scorn.

Herod himself treated Him with contempt. In this loathsome being I see the most likely person to think nothing of the Lord Jesus. Let me just say a word or two about this member of a detestable family, that I may see whether his like can be found here tonight. I will not give you any history of this Herod. It is not worth while. This "fox" is not worth unearthing. The page of history is stained by the Herodian name. I will give you enough concerning him to help you to answer the question—Are you like he? Have you set Christ at nothing? Have you treated Christ with contempt?

I. This shall be our first enquiry—WHO IS THE MOST LIKELY PERSON TO TREAT OUR LORD WITH CONTEMPT?

Herod was a man who had once heard the Word of God. Yes, heard it with a measure of attention and apparent benefit. We read, "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy and observed him. And when he heard him, he did many things and heard him gladly." According to the margin, Herod "kept him or saved him"—preserving him from those who would have laid violent hands upon him. But he broke away from his respectful regard of John and now that Jesus stands before him, his memory of the Baptist does not restrain him from mocking the Baptist's Lord. He had silenced that eloquent tongue and now he had no care to listen to anything which might further bestir his conscience.

We often find that the greatest despisers of Christ are those who formerly were hearers and readers of His Word but have turned from it. An apostate Methodist is a scoffer—a runaway Baptist is an infidel. It looks as if men must have some knowledge of the Truth of God to be able to fight against it in the most malicious way. The viper must be warmed in the man's bosom that he may have strength to bite him. Is not this a wretched business? Am I talking to any here who not so many years ago were regular attendants upon a faithful ministry but who have grown weary of it and given it up? I do not know what reason you give. But I suppose the real reason is that you love the world better than Christ and so you have left His people and His Word.

It troubles your conscience that you have done so and now you try to conceal your uneasiness by picking holes in your former minister and finding fault with the Truths of God which he preached to you. I know the tricks and manners of apostates. Wanting an opiate for your consciences, you invent a fault in the Gospel, or try to disbelieve it altogether. What an unhappy thing that the hopeful hearer should decline into a hopeless despiser! Herod heard John but he ridiculed Jesus. See to what unconverted hearers may come?

If I look at Herod again, I see in him a man who, after hearing the Word faithfully preached, had distinctly done violence to his conscience. He heard John until John came home to him about the woman with whom he was living in an incestuous union. Herodias would have killed John at once—and though Herod did not dare to go so far as that, he shut him up in prison. A filthy lust must not be rebuked—Herod imprisons his reprover. He knew that John was right and he trembled at his rebuke. But he could not give up his sin and so he put the servant of God in a dungeon. He was held fast, as many a man before, and since has been held fast, by an evil woman.

She demanded of him that at the very least the man of God should be cast into prison. How dare he speak against what the prince chose to do! How dare a peasant censure so great a man as Herod about his personal life! So, instead of bowing before the supreme authority of right and listening to the voice of truth as uttered by the Lord's Elijah, he must exercise his royal power and lay his reprover by the heels. The man who could do this was in training for the more daring act of setting the Lord Jesus at nothing.

First despise the man, and then the Master. First do violence to your better self and then scoff at godliness. My Friend, do you remember that night when you distinctly decided for the devil? Do you recollect when, after having the evil set before you and seeing it and counting the cost, you decided to continue in it? Then you turned with bitterness upon the honest reprover whose rebuke you had aforetime endured. Perhaps it was your wife upon whom you turned with anger. What hard words you said to her for the gentle remark she ventured to make! It was an effort for you. You gave conscience an awful wrench. And therefore you put yourself into a passion and talked

like an insulted man.

Or was it your brother? It may be you left his society in order to be free from his remarks. Was it your child, or your friend? You could not put them in prison. But you were determined that you would not bear any more of their protests. You abused and silenced them. Not because you thought they were wrong, but because they made you feel that you were wrong. By all this you have prepared yourself to treat the Lord with contempt. And we cannot wonder that you do so.

This man also had yielded to sinful companions and had committed a gross sin as the result of it, for when Herodias danced and he promised to give her whatsoever she desired, she asked the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And he, not liking to break his word in the presence of the assembled guests and not willing to stand out against the woman with whom he lived in unhallowed intercourse, yielded and the Baptist's head was taken from his shoulders. Ah, well, you may not have sinned quite in that way. But you, too, once had better thoughts and higher aims. Your companions were too many for you and drove all good out of you.

I do not mention this that you may dare to cast the blame upon others of that which was really your own act and deed. If there had been a spark of true manhood in you, you would have resisted the suggestion of those enemies in the garb of friends. But you are soft and plastic, like wax, in the hand of evil. Instead of being as you ought to be, like granite towards evil and like wax towards good you now feel as if you had gone too far to turn back. You are now fixed in an evil estate. A black sin seems to bar the way to repentance. Truly, even now, you will be welcomed to the bosom of mercy, but you are not anxious enough for it. It is a long lane that has no turning, but you seem to have got into such a lane and you are driven along it by evil forces.

This is the man that thinks nothing of Christ—the man who thinks so much of drinking and dancing and of the companions which such things have brought around him. Of course he does not think anything of Christ, for His ways would take from him these vile associates. How should he value the holy Jesus? Will swine ever think much of pearls? It is vain that we set before you beauties for which you have no eyes, hopes for which you have no heart. Jesus cannot be valued by a man of Herod's sort, who puts so high a value upon the opinion of those who sit with him at his banquets.

Once more—the man who thinks nothing of Christ is the man that means to go on in sin, even as Herod did. The die was cast—his mind was made up for evil. He would be very glad to hear Christ—he has no objection, still, to go to a place of worship and listen to a preacher. He would be very pleased to see a miracle—he would join in a revival, for he would be glad to enjoy something sensational—but he does not mean to give up the sin in which he lives, nor the company which eggs him on in it. He does not mean to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye. Not he! He is too fond of the vice, too much ensnared by his passions.

And so, as he gives his heart to his lust, he takes away his heart from Christ. No, he treats religion with derision, because it is opposed to his bent and inclination. What a sad thing! I generally find when man speaks against the Lord Jesus, that if you follow him home he would rather not have you go indoors for fear his inner life should be known. He does not want you to see the skeleton in the closet. I have so often met with this fact in actual life that when I have heard a man speak bitterly of my Master, I have formed my opinion and have not been wrong. A little enquiry has revealed so much that I have said, "It is not at all surprising that such a man should speak evil of

Christ. It is as natural to such a man to talk against Christ as for a dog to bark."

When a bad fellow once praised Socrates, that philosopher said, "I wonder what I can have been doing amiss, that such a man should speak well of me." If lustful lips praised the Savior, one might begin to be afraid. But when they denounce and deride Him, we feel that it is the only homage which vice can pay to Purity.

This, then, is the man who sets Jesus at nothing. I wonder whether he is here tonight! Possibly it is a woman who is doing this. Women fall into precisely the same evils as men from their own side of the house and the same remarks apply to both sexes. You who once were hearers, you who once were impressed, you who did willful violence to conscience. You who persist in sin, you who are the slaves of evil company and dare not do right for the life of you, for fear of ridicule—you are the kind of people of whom Herod was a sad specimen—you set Jesus at nothing. You treat my Master in contempt.

II. Having tried to find out Herod, let us now answer a second question—ON WHAT GROUND DID HE TREAT OUR LORD WITH CONTEMPT?

Men have some reason or other for their acts, although often those reasons are most unreasonable. Before we consider the unhallowed reasons for this great crime, let us do homage to the name of the Son of God. O Lord Jesus, even in Your lowest humiliation You are worthy of all reverence. To Your friends You are all the more dear and the more honored because You were greatly despised. You, bound and brought a prisoner before the tetrarch, are free to rule our hearts. You were charged with sedition but we fall at Your blessed feet and proclaim You King of kings!

Herod sets Him up as the butt of his ridicule and makes nothing of Him. As Herbert puts it—

"Herod and all his bands do set Me light, Who teach all hands to war, fingers to fight, And only the Lord of Hosts and might. Was ever grief like Mine?"

I suppose that part of the reason why he and his men of war made nothing of our Lord was because of His gentleness and patience. Our Lord had no sword and none of the temper of men who wear weapons. His visage was not like the face of a man of war—it was marred with grief but not with anger. Worn with sorrow but not with battle. He was the lamb and not the lion, the dove and not the eagle and therefore the fighting men despised Him.

If he had any weapons they were His tears and His almighty love. But these the Herodian ruffians utterly despised. All unarmed He stood before them and when He was reviled He reviled not again. You know how men of muscular strength and physical bravado value men by their muscles and bones and think nothing of those who are feeble in arm and body. The Savior, in His emaciation and faintness, must have seemed a poor creature to these ruffians. The Christian religion teaches us to be meek and gentle, to forgive injuries and even to give up our own rights rather than to inflict wrong.

Such precepts savor of cowardice to the blustering world. Nonresistance they cannot hear of. They do not like the word "Forgive." "Surely," they say, "a worm will turn?" Thus they think so little of Christ that they prefer an earthworm's example to that of the Lord. The sweet savor of gentle forbearance, which the spirit of Jesus breathes into the hearts of His people, is held in contempt by

many. They call it cant and hypocrisy because it is so alien to their nature, so inconsistent with their ideas of manly conduct.

Furthermore, our Lord was ridiculed by Herod because He refused to gratify his curiosity and amuse his love of sensation. The wicked Herod virtually said to the holy Jesus, "Come, work us a miracle. We hear that you did deliver from death, now release yourself from our hands. We hear that you did multiply loaves and fishes and feed multitudes. Give us a banquet here. You can do all things, so reports say of You—come, do some little thing that we may see and believe. Did not Moses work miracles before Pharaoh? Work a miracle before us."

There stands our Lord, with all power in His hands but He will not lift a finger for His own deliverance and Herod's amusement. O blessed Jesus, it is the same still, You will not dazzle nor amuse and therefore men prefer any charlatan to You. Herod then begins to question Him. He asks Him this and that and the other, with many a jest rolled in between. But he receives no answer. He who answered blind beggars when they cried for mercy is silent to a prince who only seeks to gratify his own irreverent curiosity. Then the men-at-arms laugh at their silent victim. "Why," they say, "the man is dumb. Either He can say nothing for Himself, or He is obstinate and ill-mannered. He speaks not when He is spoken to. Has He lost His wits?"

Thereupon they multiply their profane jests and make nothing of the silent One. I do not doubt that often men turn away from the faith because their curiosity is not gratified and they see nothing marvelous in it. A Gospel for the age! A brand new Gospel every year might suit them. But the old is stale—they know all about it and sneer at it. Plain Gospel is too plain for them. They desire adornment, or at least mystery and the pomp which veils the unknown. They would rather go where there are gorgeous ceremonies and mutterings in an unknown tongue amid the smoke of incense and the harmony of music. The simple Gospel of, "Believe and live," does not suit them. For it seems fit only for the poor and uneducated— thus they treat Jesus with contempt.

Moreover, the royal claims of Jesus excited their scorn. I think I hear the "Aha! Aha! Aha!" of Herod as he said, "Call Him a King? You could find such kings as this in every street of Jerusalem. Talk of a kingdom for Him! Go to the pool of Bethesda and fetch up some poor wretch who lies waiting there for the moving of the water and call him a king! King? What hosts are at Your command? What kingdom do You govern? What laws can You make? Here! Put the white robe upon Him. Let Him at least look like a monarch. Yes, that old robe will do! Is He not every inch a King?"

Then the soldiery took up the jest! How bitterly, how derisively did they make His royalty the football of contempt! Thus today the world makes nothing of the royalty of King Jesus. A nominal king He may be but as a real king they will not have Him. Those who would be in the dust before the mean prince have no esteem for Him. There is no pomp about the pure religion of Jesus. There is no glory of philosophy about His teaching. And so they set Him and His cause at nothing. Ah, me, what will a rebellious people do in the day when He appears to claim His throne and punish sedition?

Then, too, they denied His prophetic office. "Look!" said Herod, "He will not speak. I have asked Him twenty questions and He will not answer one of them. This is a pretty Prophet! John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness but this man has no voice at all. A dumb Prophet! Why, He is mute as a fish and has nothing to say for Himself." With such unhallowed merriment did Herod and

his men of war treat the Lord with contempt. How they provoked Him! But He stands in the majesty of His selfgovernment, quiet to the end. Here was an Omnipotence which restrained the lips of Omnipotence. It was a wondrous power, that God-like patience which enabled indignant Holiness to withhold its word of condemnation.

The Prophet proved His commission by His silence. And yet He provoked their scorn, so that they set Him at nothing. At this time, because the Christian faith is silent upon a great many questions, certain men deride it. When men come to it with captious questions they receive no answer and they are irritated thereby. When they idly demand a miracle and it does not yield to their desires, they have fresh jeers for it. "You preach up the faith of Christ as the only true and Divine religion—let us see it work wonders. Where are your miracles? We have asked you fifty questions about the past and the future and you do not reply. Where is the ground for your boastings?" Thus they make nothing of Christ and disdain His claim to teach with authority.

Those, I suppose, were the grounds upon which Herod and such as Herod, make light of Christ. Poor grounds they are, and such as will fail to justify them before the bar of God.

III. Now, dear Friends, let us consider—DO MEN NOW SET OUR LORD AT NOTHING? DO MEN NOW TREAT OUR LORD WITH CONTEMPT? Herod is dead and buried and there is no sort of reason why we should not let him rot into oblivion. I therefore speak to you and try to discover whether you are setting Christ at nothing. Are you treating our Lord with contempt? I fear there are such. Who are they?

Some set Him at nothing for they will not even consider His claims. "Oh," they say, "we have plenty else to think about besides religion. What is there in it which will fill our pockets? There is nothing at all in it worth a moment's attention." How do they know? They do not know. Nothing in it? God gives His own Son to die for guilty men and there is nothing in it? The highest thoughts of God are set forth in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and you do not think it worth while even to consider what God has therein revealed?

A man goes to a bookstall and turns over a book. It is a novel—he reads a page and would like to buy it. But suppose it is a book upon the glories of Christ. Does he read, then? Does he wish to buy it? No. It is one of those dry theological books and he shuts it up. He will make no bid for a volume on so dull a subject. He would like to know of Alexander the Great or even of Tom Thumb but for the world's Redeemer he cares nothing. He makes nothing of Christ—he treats our Lord with contempt.

Do I not convict some here present tonight? They have never set apart one solitary hour in their lives to the honest and candid consideration of the claims of Jesus, the Divine Savior. If it is so, you have, indeed, made Christ very cheap. And if you perish for lack of Him, your blood is on your own heads! If this is the medicine that will heal your disease, and you huff at it, and will not even hear of the cures it has worked, who is to blame if you perish? Who is to save the man who will not listen when salvation is put before him? Yet the great mass of our fellow citizens are of this kind.

In London there are millions who make so little of Christ that they will not even come to hear what His ministers have to say about Him, nor read their Bibles, nor show the least interest in the matter. In many a house in London, Mahomet is practically as much esteemed as Jesus. Ah me,

There are many others who prefer their business to Jesus. They would not mind giving some little attention to the Lord Jesus but then they are too busy just now. They say that they really cannot afford the time. O my busy Hearer! You will have to find time to die before long—why not think of that solemn certainty? You are very busy and yet you find time to eat. Have you no time to feed your soul? You find time to put on your dress, have you no time to dress your souls? You seek out the surgeon when you are ill. Have you no time to seek out a Savior for your sin-sick soul? Ah, it is not that—you have the time but you have not the heart.

Others prefer amusements to the Lord Jesus. "Well," says one, "we must have recreation. In my spare time I like a game." I know that. I am not for denying you healthy recreation but everything should be in order and I claim first place for Jesus Christ and His salvation. What? Is it not worth while to give up a sport to seek Jesus? Do you think a game of cards more important than seeking the pardon of your sin? An evening at the theater or the music hall—do you really think so little of Jesus that you can live without Him and satisfy your mind with these poor things? Can you suffer the paltry amusements of the world to stand before the Lord Jesus?

Yet it is so with some of you—I wish it were not. My Master's blood and righteousness, the salvation of a soul from Hell, the preparing of a heart for Heaven—these are laid away in the lumber-room—to allow the childish pleasures of a vain world to engross your thoughts. You will know better one day. God grant you may learn wisdom while yet it may be of use to you. Too late! What awful words! May you even now feel that if the Son of God has lived and died for men, it is of the first importance that you put business and pleasure in their proper places and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Another sort of persons make nothing of Christ because they profess to see nothing profound and philosophical in the faith which He has revealed. These are the Greeks, to whom the doctrine of the Cross is foolishness. O foolish Greeks! These wise men will not hear some of us because we can be understood by the people. "Anybody can understand you," they say, "you speak after the manner of the crowd and what you say is simple enough to be clear to the most ignorant. We like something deeper, something too profound to be readily grasped. We are above commonplace people and need something more intellectual and philosophical."

A man of note once said to me, "Why do you keep on preaching to those thousands at Newington? Preach so that the mob will leave you and the elite will support you." To whom I answered that if one man's soul was of less value than another, his was of the least value who could talk so slightingly of others. Those who make no pretense to culture are often far more sensible people than those who affect superiority. The man who thinks that he is intellectual and talks in that fashion is a miserable snob, and has scarcely a soul at all.

When a man despises the multitude, he deserves to be despised himself. But, my dear Sir, if the salvation of Christ is very simple and very plain, is it not so much the better? Have you not enough of philanthropy to make you feel that if you could have a Gospel only for the elite, it would be a matter of deep regret? Is not a Gospel for the multitude the thing to be desired? Do you not desire the vast mass to be saved? I hope you do. But I fear you make nothing of Christ when you despise His Gospel because you imagine that it is not deep enough and philosophical enough for you. The most profound science in the world is the science of the Cross! Christ Himself is the highest wisdom, for He is the wisdom of God.

Others treat Christ with contempt because they confide in themselves. They think themselves quite good enough without a Savior. If they are not quite perfect, they believe that they can make themselves so and be saved without an atoning sacrifice, or a new heart, or union to Christ. They are doing their best and they make no doubt, whatever, that they will find their way to Heaven as well as others. Do you thus think? You are in grave error. There was a learned Romanist who once ventured to say that if salvation could only be had on terms of Free Grace, he would not have it. Do you know what happened? Why, he did not have it—that was all. And that is what will happen to you—if you will not have salvation as a free gift of Divine Grace, without any merit wherewith to purchase it—then you must go without it and perish in your sin. For the terms of Free Grace will never be altered to suit the pride of the human heart.

If any man sets up his righteousness in the place of Jesus Christ, the sin-removing Lamb, why then he has made nothing of Christ and the Lord will make less than nothing of him. Alas, that any man should be so profane as to think himself so good that he does not need God's Grace and the atoning blood! Such pride treats the Lord Christ with contempt and will bring sure destruction upon the man who is guilty of it.

I have no doubt that there are many, also, who treat Christ with contempt because they have no conscience whatever as to His present claims upon them. O dear Sirs, if you did but know His kindness to the sons of men, even to His enemies and how He sought them with His tears and then bought them with His blood, you would feel forced to love Him—

"Surely Christ deserves the noblest place In every human heart."

Truly know Jesus and you must love Him.

But some men do not think that they owe Him anything, or are in any need of Him. It is nothing to such that He died, for they did not require His death to save them—in their judgment they are not lost. Those who are of this mind will leave this Tabernacle tonight and will go back to the world just as they came in, practically saying, "Whether Jesus lived or whether He died and whatever He did or was, I care nothing, for I owe Him nothing." And yet you owe Him everything. You had not been here tonight if it were not for the mercy which has spared you and which has come to you through Him. The axe would have had you down long ago but for His intercession.

There had been no Gospel to set before you tonight if it had not been for the death agony of the Lord Jesus. You owe the very opportunity of hearing the Gospel and the opportunity of accepting it to His dying love. Oh, that you had a conscience which would make you just towards Jesus! Oh, that you felt that you were bound to love Him and live for Him, because of all that He has done for guilty men!

As they have no conscience of His claims upon them, so many have no fears concerning the day of His appearing. Whether you believe it or not, Jesus, as your Judge, is at the door. He said, years ago, "Behold, I am coming quickly." He is still coming and must soon arrive to commence the last dread session of justice. What matters it how many more years may elapse? They will fly like the wind. The day will come when Heaven and earth shall be ablaze. The thick darkness will lower down—

"And, withering from the vault of night, The stars shall pale their feeble light." The hour will come when the earth and sky will rock and reel and pass away, rolled up like a worn-out vesture. Then shall the trumpet ring out exceeding loud and long—"Awake, you dead and come to judgment!" How will you endure that voice which shall disturb the stillness of the sepulcher? "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment!" How it will peal forth! None of you will be able to resist the call. From your beds of dust you will start up amazed to a terrible awakening. From the sea, from the land, from the teeming cemetery, from the lonely grave, men will rise, and all of them stand before Christ!

In that day you will see nothing but the Great White Throne and Him that sits upon it. You will be unable to close your eyes, or to turn your gaze elsewhere. There will He sit and you will know Him by His scars—

"How resplendent shine the nail-prints! Every eye shall see Him move."

Still shall the trumpet thrill out the summons, "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!" And you must come, whether you will or not. And if you have despised the Lord as Savior, you will tremble before Him as Judge. You will then hear His voice, which in itself is sweeter than the harps of Heaven but to the ungodly it will be more full of thunder than the crash of tempest—"Depart! Depart! Depart!"

O my Hearer, what will then become of you? The prospect is terrible— but you have no concern about it. To die, to rise, to be judged, to be condemned—you take no account of it. Like Herod, you set him at nothing. Like Herod, you treat Him with contempt. How dare you do so? How dare you despise the great Judge? Ah, my Lord, have mercy upon them! Have mercy upon them now and turn them from doing to You and to themselves this grievous wrong of making nothing of the Lord of All. They set Him at nothing!

This is very heavy preaching to me. If it is as painful to you to hear as to me to speak, you will be glad when I have done. I pray that these solemn words may long remain upon your hearts. Oh, that they might bring you to Jesus at once by the power of the Holy Spirit!

IV. But I close with this—WHAT DO BELIEVERS SAY ABOUT THEIR LORD? Herod made nothing of Him—what do we make of Him? Well, we say, first, that we mourn and lament that there ever was a time when we ourselves made nothing of the glorious One. It is many years ago with some of us. But we cannot forget it, nor cease to bewail it. There were a certain number of years in our lives in which it was nothing to us that Jesus should die.

O my dear Hearers, perhaps some of you have been lately converted after forty, or fifty, or sixty years of sin. Repent with all your hearts that you were Herods so long. Christ has forgiven you. But can you forgive yourselves? No. I think that you still smite on your breast and say, "Lord, I grieve that ever I lived a moment without acknowledging You as my Lord— that I ever ate a meal or drew in a breath without bowing before You." Lord, bury those years in forgetfulness which we spent in forgetfulness of You! Next, it is now our grief that any others should set the Lord Jesus at nothing. It must be a great grief to any man here if she who lies in his bosom treats the Lord with contempt. Dear woman, I know what your daily burden must be if the husband who is so dear to you does not love your Savior whom you love with a higher love. What an anguish it is to nourish and bring up children and see them refuse our Lord! I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in

the Truth. And no greater sorrow than to see them running into evil ways.

Could we really see the heart of an unregenerate man or woman it would cause us the utmost distress. If we felt as we ought to feel, if there were only one unconverted person in this Tabernacle, we should make a Bochim of it till that heart was yielded to Christ. If there existed only one man or woman who did not love the Savior. And if that person lived among the wilds of Siberia and it were necessary that all the millions of Believers on the face of the earth should journey there and plead with him to come to Jesus before he could be converted, it would be well worth all the zeal and labor and expense of all that effort.

One soul would repay the travail in birth of myriads of zealous Christians. Lord, we cannot bear it that there should go on existing men and women who make nothing of the bleeding Son of God! It is an awful thing—as awful as Hell itself! Out in that street tonight think of the thousands who will be hunting for the precious life. Walk along our crowded thoroughfares and think of the myriads even of this city who live and die without God and without hope, making nothing of Jesus and you will feel a heartbreak which will make life a burden. I could wish that you felt that heartbreak for their sakes and for Christ's sake.

But then, dear Friends, what do we make of Christ ourselves now? Well, that I cannot tell you, except it is in one word—Christ is All. Herod made nothing of Him. We make everything of Him—

"All my spacious powers can wish, In You do richly meet; Nor to my eyes is light so dear, Nor friendship half so sweet."

Could any of you who love my Lord tell me what you think of Him? I am sure that you would break down in the attempt. For my own part, I always fail in the glad endeavor—

"When my tongue would hope to express All His love and loveliness, Then I lisp and falter forth Broken words not half His worth."

If we could give every drop of our blood for Jesus. If we could be burnt at a slow fire for a century for Him, He deserves all our suffering and all our life. Could our zeal know no respite, a whole eternity of service would not adequately set forth what we think of Him.

I close with this practical thought. Sometimes Believers show their love and their appreciation of their Master by special acts of homage. Herod, you see, when he made nothing of Him, said, "Here, bring out that glittering white robe of mine and put it on Him, that we may heap contempt upon Him. He calls Himself a King! Let us pay Him homage!" They mocked Him, and they put the robe upon Him and then sent Him back to Pilate. Now, I want you to imitate Herod in the opposite direction. Let us do our Lord special honor tonight. Let us crown Him. As soon as we have opportunity, let us make some special offering of our substance to His cause.

Let us set apart a season for adoration and reverent worship. Let us resolve that for His sake we will speak well of His name to somebody to whom we have not yet spoken. It may be that some of you can sing a hymn to Jesus with choice music, or write a glorious verse for His dear sake. Go, take your pen and dip it in your heart and write a fresh tract in honor of His blessed name. Herod set Him at nothing but let us set Him on high in our best manner. Set Him at the highest figure that your thought and your imagination can reach.

It may be that some Brother here could preach about his Lord and yet he has not opened his mouth from timidity. Come, try, my Friend. Shake off your bashfulness. It may be that some Sister here might teach women, or get together a class of youngsters and glorify Christ by instructing them. I long to undo what Herod did and pay the Well-Beloved a recompense for His shame. Oh, how would I honor Him! But what am I? What can one person do? Come, all of you, my Brethren, and help to cry "Hosanna!"

Alas, what are we all together? The music has no volume in it, compared with what He deserves. Come, all you saints and worship Him! And what are all the saints on earth? Come, you in Heaven, who bear the palm, redeemed, perfected and white-robed as you are—come, worship Him who washed your robes in His own blood! And what are all they? Even the armies of the redeemed suffice not. Come, all holy ones and praise Him—

"Angels, assist our mighty joys! Strike all your harps of gold! But when you raise your highest notes, His love can never be told."

Therefore do I summon all things that are to praise the Lord, without whom was not anything made. I charge all living things to adore Him who is the resurrection and the life. Let space become one great mouth for song. Let time unceasingly flow with hallelujahs. Let eternity become an orchestra to the praise of Jesus who was mocked of Herod and his men of war. Glory be to His name! Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen.

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

Luke 23,8-9 #1645 - Our Lord before Herod

OUR LORD BEFORE HEROD

NO. 1645

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19, 1882,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad: for he was desirous to see Him for a long season, because he

had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have

seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him in many words; but He answered him nothing."

Luke 23:8. 9.

AFTER Pilate had declared to the chief priests and scribes that he found no fault at all in Jesus, they were afraid that their victim would escape and, therefore, their fury was raised to the highest pitch and they cried out the more vehemently against Him. In the course of their outcries they made use of the word, "Galilee," going, as it seems to me, a little out of their way in order to drag in the name—"He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place." Galilee was a region held in very great contempt and they mentioned it to cast a slur upon our Lord, as if He were a mere boor from among the clowns of Galilee. To Pilate, they thought that the mention of the name would, perhaps, act like the proverbial red rag held before an infuriated bull, for he appears to have been troubled by seditious persons from that province.

We all remember that they were Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. The Galileans were reputed to be an ignorant people, apt to be led astray by impostors and so enthusiastic that they ventured their lives against the Romans. The priests would not only cast contempt upon Jesus, whom they were known to call the Galilean, but also excite the prejudices of Pilate, so that he might condemn Him to die as one of a nest of rebels. They were mistaken, however, in the consequences of their device, for Pilate caught at the word, "Galilee," directly. That province was not immediately under his rule—it was under the sway of the tetrarch Herod Antipas and, therefore, he thought within himself, "I can kill two birds with one stone—I can get rid of this troublesome business by sending this prisoner to Herod—and I can also greatly gratify the king by showing him this attention."

Pilate had quarreled with Herod and now, for some purpose of his own, he resolved to patch up a friendship by pretending great deference to his sovereign powers by sending one of his subjects to be tried by him. Pilate, therefore, asked, "Is this man a Galilean?" and when they told him that He

was—for He was so by repute, His birth at Bethlehem having been willfully ignored—then Pilate at once commanded that He be led to Herod, for Herod was in his palace at Jerusalem attending the Passover festival. See, then, my Brothers and Sisters, our Divine Master conducted in His third march of sorrow through Jerusalem! First, He was led from the garden to the house of Annas; then He was conducted through the streets from the hall of Caiaphas to the judgment hall of Pilate. And now, by Pilate's orders, He is led a third time by the angry crowd of priests through the streets to the palace of Herod, there to await His fourth examination! Certain of the old writers delight to remark that as there were four evangelists to do honor to our Lord, so were there four judges to do Him shame. Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod. We are on safer ground when we observe with the early Church the coalition of the heathen and the Jews—"For of a truth against Your holy Child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined before to be done."

This morning I shall endeavor to set forth this portion of the sad narrative under two heads, which will be these—Herod before Jesus—and Jesus before Herod.

I. I call your attention, first, to HEROD BEFORE JESUS because you must know something of his character, something of the meaning of his questions, before you can rightly understand the sorrow which they caused Jesus, our Lord and Master. This Herod Antipas was the son of the old Herod the Great who had put to death the babes at Bethlehem in the hope of destroying the King of the Jews. He was a chip off the old block, but still, he was several degrees baser than his father. There was nothing of the grandeur of his father about him. There was the same evil disposition without the courage and the decision. He did not, in some things, out-Herod Herod, for in certain points he was a more despicable person. Herod the Great may be called a lion, but our Lord very descriptively called this lesser Herod a fox, saying, "Go and tell this fox."

He was a man of dissolute habits and frivolous mind. He was very much under the sway of a wicked woman who destroyed any little good there might have been in him. He was a lover of pleasure, a lover of himself, depraved, weak and trifling to the last degree. I almost grudge to call him a man, therefore let him only be called a tetrarch. This petty tetrarch had once been the subject of religious impressions. These Herods all, more or less, felt the influence of religion at times, though they were by no means benefited thereby. The impressions made upon his conscience by John did not last with Herod. They were, at first, powerful and practical, for we are informed that, "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

I suppose he reformed many matters in his kingdom and cast off, perhaps, some of his grosser vices. But when, at last John began to denounce him for having taken his brother's wife to be his paramour, while yet the brother lived, he cast his reprover into prison. And then you remember how, with reluctance, Herod, to please his mistress, beheaded John in prison. Mark this—probably there is no more dangerous character living than a man who has once come under religious influences so as to be materially affected by them—and yet has broken loose and cast off all fear of God! He has done despite to his conscience so violently that from now on he will know few qualms.

In such a man is fulfilled the saying of our Lord, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest and finds none. Then he says, I will return into my house from where I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The mind of Herod Antipas was in the condition of the chamber which has been swept and garnished, for his life had been somewhat reformed, but the unclean spirit with the terrible seven had come back to his old den and now he was a worse man by a great deal than he had ever been before. The dog returned to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

This Herod was an Idumaean, that is to say, one of the descendants of Esau, an Edomite, and though he had professedly become a Jew, yet the old blood was in him, as it is written concerning Edom, "He did pursue his brother with the sword and cast off all pity." The true Jacob stood before one of the seed of Esau, a tetrarch, profane and worldly like his ancestor—and scant was the pity which He received. Esau was descended from Abraham according to the flesh, but with Jacob was the Covenant according to the spirit—it bodes no good to the spiritual seed when it comes, even for a moment, under the power of the carnal seed!

We see how the child of the flesh takes to mocking, while the child according to promise is called to patience. Herod was in such a state of mind that he furnishes me with a typical character which I would use for the instruction and admonition of you all. He is a type of some who frequently come to this Tabernacle and go to other places of worship, occasionally— people who were once under religious impressions and cannot forget that they were so—but who will never be under any religious impressions again. They are now hardened into vain curiosity! They wish to know about everything that is going on in the Church and Kingdom of Christ, but they are far enough from caring to become part and parcel of it, themselves. They are possessed with an idle curiosity which would lift the golden lid of the Ark and intrude behind the veil.

They like to gather together all the absurd stories which are told about ministers and to retail all the odd remarks that were ever made by preachers for centuries. All the gossip of the Churches is sure to be known to them, for they eat up the sins of God's people as they eat bread! It is not likely that their knowledge of religious things will be of any use to them, but they are always eager after it. The Church of God is their lounge; Divine service is their theater; ministers are to them, as actors, and the Gospel, itself, so much play-house property. They are a sort of religious Athenians, spending their time in nothing else than in hearing some new thing, hoping that, perhaps, some singular and unexpected discourse may be delivered in their hearing which they can retail in the next company where they would raise a laugh. To them, preaching is all a farce and, worked up with a few falsehoods of their own, it makes excellent fun for them and causes them to be regarded as amusing fellows. Let them look at Herod and see in him their leader, the type of what they really are or may soon become!

First, let us see idle curiosity at its best. Look here, Sirs, and then look in a glass and trace the likeness! To begin with, we find that Herod's curiosity had been created in him by his having heard many things concerning Jesus. How did he come to hear of Him? His great deeds were common talk—all Jerusalem rang with the news of His miracles and wondrous words. Herod, a convert to the Jewish faith, such as he was, took interest in anything that was going on among the Jews and

all the more so if it touched upon the kingdom, for the jealousy which set his father in a rage was not altogether absent in his son. No doubt, also, he had heard of Christ from John. John would not long have preached to Herod without using his own grand text, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

I am sure that, though he was a preacher of righteousness, he had not left off being the herald of the coming Savior! And so, from the stern lips of the great Baptist, Herod had heard concerning the King of the Jews and something concerning His Kingdom. When John was dead, Herod heard still more of Christ, so that, astonished with what was being done, he said, "This is John the Baptist whom I have beheaded: he is risen from the dead!" Jesus became a kind of nightmare to his conscience. He was disturbed and alarmed by what he heard that the Prophet of Nazareth was doing. Besides that, there was one in his household who doubtless knew a great deal about the Savior, for in Herod's court was the husband of a woman who ministered unto the Lord of her substance.

The lady's name was Joanna and her husband was Chuza, Herod's steward—I suppose Herod's butler and manager of his household. From Chuza he could readily have learned concerning Jesus and we may be sure that he would enquire, for the fear of the great Prophet was upon him. Thus Herod's curiosity had been excited about our Lord Jesus Christ for a considerable time and he longed to see Him. I am not sorry when this happens to any of my Hearers. I am right glad that they should hear something about the Lord from His friends, something about Him from His ministers and from those of us whose highest glory it is that, though we are not worthy to unloose the laces of His shoes, yet it is all our business here below to cry, "Behold the Lamb!" So these rumors, this talk, these admonitions had begotten in Herod's mind the desire that his eyes should light on Jesus—so far, so good.

Often men at this day come up to the House of Prayer that they may hear the preacher—not because they want to be converted, not because they have any idea of ever becoming followers of Jesus—but because they have heard something about true religion which excites their curiosity and they want to know what it is all about. They are fond of curiosities of literature and so they would study curiosities of religion, oddities of oratory and things remarkable of a theological kind. It is said of Herod, in consequence of this curiosity, that he rejoiced to see Jesus. It is said that he was, "exceedingly glad." What a hopeful state to be in! May we not expect great things when a man sees Jesus and is exceedingly glad? As I read this passage to myself, I thought, Why, the language might well describe a child of God! Our text might fitly be spoken concerning ourselves!

Let me read it line by line and remark upon it. "When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad." So were the Apostles when Jesus manifested Himself to them, for it is written, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." What other sight could bring to a true Believer such joy? "For he was desirous to see Him." Are we not? Are not all His people longing for that blessed vision which will make their Heaven throughout eternity? "For he was desirous to see Him for a long season." This is also true of us—our hearts are weary with watching and our eyes fail for the sight of His face. "Why does He tarry?" we cry. "Make haste, my Beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." "Because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him."

This, also, is our hope—we would both see and feel some gracious miracle—upon our eyes, that they may be opened, or upon our hands, that we may have greater power in the Master's work! Or upon our feet, that we may run in the ways of obedience. And especially upon our hearts, that we may be always soft and tender, pure and gracious, to feel the mind of God. Yes, these words read very prettily, indeed! But yet, you see, the meaning was not the high and spiritual one which we could put into them, but the low and groveling one which was all that Herod could reach. He was "exceedingly glad," but it was a frivolous gladness because he hoped that now his curiosity would be satisfied.

He had Jesus in his power and he hoped, now, to hear some of the oratory of the Prophet of whom men said, "Never man spoke like this Man." He hoped to see Him work a miracle, even He, of whom the record was, "He has done all things well." Could not the great Prophet be induced to multiply loaves and fishes? Might he not persuade Him to heal a blind beggar, or make a lame man leap as a hart? Would not a miracle make rare mirth in Herod's palace and cause a new sensation in the mind of the worn-out debauchee? If, for instance, a corpse were dug up and Jesus would restore it to life, it would be something to tell when next the king sat down to a drinking bout with Herodias and her like! When each was trying to exceed the other in telling strange tales, Herod would top them all!

In this style many people come to hear the Gospel. They want to have an anecdote of their own about a notorious preacher—and if they do see something ludicrous, or hear something striking, they will invent a tale and swear that they heard it and saw it, though the lie might well choke them! They act thus because they come to hear for nothing but to feed their hungry curiosity! None carry this to such an extreme as those who did at one time feel a measure of the power of the Word of God but have shaken it off. These are the mockers whose bands are made strong. These are the idlers who turn even the testimony of the Lord into food for mirth! Still, at the first blush, there is something that looks very hopeful about them and we are pleased that they exhibit such gladness when Christ is set forth before them.

One evil sign about Herod was the fact that his conscience had gone to sleep after having, for a while, troubled him. For a little while he had been afraid of Jesus and trembled lest John had risen from the dead. But that fear had subsided and superstition had given way before his Sadducean skepticism. He hoped that Jesus would perform some wonderful thing in his presence, but he had lost all dread of the Just and Holy One. He was a man of vain mind—the man whom he feared one day—he murdered the next! And He whom he welcomed with gladness, he hurried off with derision. There was left to Herod no feeling towards Jesus but the craving after something new, the desire to be astonished, the wish to be amused.

I think I see him now, sitting on his throne, expectant of wonders, like the trifler that he was. "Now we shall see," he says, "now we shall see what we shall see! Perhaps He will deliver Himself by sheer force! If He walked the sea, He will probably fly away in the air! Perhaps He will render Himself invisible and so pass away through the midst of the chief priests. I have heard that many a time when they would have stoned Him or cast Him down from the brow of a hill, He departed, gliding through their midst—perhaps He will do the same this morning." There sits the cunning prince, thinking what the wonder will be—regarding even displays of Divine power as mere showman's tricks, or magician's illusions!

When Jesus was set before Him, he began to ask Him questions. "Then he questioned Him in many words." I am glad the questions are not recorded. They could have done us no good and, besides, our modern Herods, nowadays, are great masters of the art and need not that any man teach them. We need not to be furnished with the old-fashioned quibbles and questions, for the supply is quite equal to our requirements. Fools can ask more questions in 10 minutes than wise men are able to answer in 50 years! I say we do not need the old questions, but I daresay they would run somewhat in this line, "Are You that King of the Jews whom my father strove to slay? How came You are a Nazarene? Have You been a miracle worker, or is it all slight of hand and black magic? John told me something about You. Did You deceive him, or is it true? Have you raised the dead? Can you heal the sick?"

Trying all the while to excite Him to work a miracle, he raised doubts and chopped logic volubly, for the text suggestively mentions his, "many words." The curious in religion are generally very apt at asking questions, not that they want Christ; not that they want Heaven; not that they want pardon of sin—not that they want any good thing—but still they would like to know everything that is dark and mysterious in theology. They would like to have a list of the difficulties of belief, a catalog of the curiosities of spiritual experience. Some men collect ferns, others are learned upon beetles, but these persons pry into Church life, its doctrines, pursuits, aims and infirmities—especially the latter! They could write a book upon orthodox England and unorthodox England and dwell with unction upon mental vagaries. It furnishes them with something new and adds to their store of information—and so they spare no prying questions, for they would analyze manna from Heaven, and distil the tears of Christ—nothing is sacred to them! They put Scripture on the rack and laugh at the words of the Holy Spirit!

Thus have I set forth idle curiosity in its latter stage. Now let us pass on an see how Jesus treated this curiosity, considering it under the head of IDLE CURIOSITY DISAPPOINTED. "He questioned Him in many words, but He answered him nothing!" If Herod had wanted to believe, Jesus would have been ready enough to instruct. If Herod had possessed a broken heart, Jesus would have hastened with tender words to bind it up. If Herod bad been a candid enquirer; if his doubts had been sincere and true, the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, would have been delighted to speak with him!

But Jesus knew that Herod would not believe in Him and would not take up his cross and follow Him and, therefore, He would not waste words on a heartless, soulless profligate. Had He not said to His own disciples, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine"? He saw in this man one so mean, cunning, cowardly and heartless that He viewed him as a fox to be let alone rather than a lost sheep to be sought after! He was a tree twice dead and plucked up by the roots. All the Master did was to maintain an absolute silence in his presence, "and let him question as he might, He answered him nothing."

Observe, my Brothers and Sisters, that our Lord Jesus Christ came not into this world to be a performer! He did not leave His Glory to earn the wondering approbation of men. And as Herod regarded Him as a mere wonderworker and would have turned his court into a theater where Jesus would be the chief actor, our Lord very wisely held His peace and did nothing at all. And sometimes His ministers might be wise if they were silent, too. If they know that men have no desire to learn, no spiritual wish or aspiration, I say they might be wise if they held their tongue

altogether. I have sometimes admired George Fox, who, on one occasion, when the crowd had gathered round him, expecting him to deliver some fiery address, stood still by the space of two hours while they clamored that he should speak.

Never a word did they get from him. He said he would famish them of words for words were all they wanted and not the power of the Spirit. Probably they remembered his silence better than they would have remembered his most vehement discourse. Sometimes silence is all that men deserve and the only thing which, in any probability, will impress them. As the Lord Jesus was no performer, He did not gratify Herod, but answered him not a word. Moreover, be it remembered that Herod had already silenced the Voice and no marvel that he could not hear the Word. For what was John? He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." What was Jesus but the Word? He that silences the Voice may well be denied the Word!

Had not his shallow soul been moved—I was about to say, to its depths, such depths as they were—had he not been admonished by one of the greatest of the children of men? For among them that were born of women there had not, then, been a greater than John the Baptist! Had not a burning and shining light shone right into his very eyes? And if he refused to hear the greatest of the sons of men and to see the brightest light that God had then kindled, it was but right that the Savior should refuse him even a ray of light and let him perish in the darkness which he had, himself, created. Ah, Sirs, you cannot trifle with religious impressions with impunity! God thinks it no trifle! He who has once been moved in his soul and has put away the heavenly Word of God may fear that it will be said of him, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."

May not some conscience here, if it has but a little life in it, be alarmed at the memory of former rejections of the Gospel, frequent quenching of the Spirit, repeated trampling upon the blood of Jesus? If God never speaks to you again in the way of mercy, you have no right to expect that He should do so! And if, from this day to the Day of Judgment, the Lord should never give you another word of mercy, who shall say that you have been treated harshly? Have you not deserved it at His hands as Herod had done?

Furthermore, remember that Herod might have heard Christ hundreds of times before if he had chosen to do so. Jesus was always to be found by those who desired to listen to Him. He did not go sneaking about Galilee, or holding secret conventicles in holes and corners. He always spoke in the synagogue and Herod might have gone there. He spoke in the street or by the seashore, or on the mountain side and Herod might have gone there, too. Jesus stood out boldly before the people and His teaching was public and free—if Herod had wished to hear Him, he might have done so times beyond number! Therefore now, having despised all these opportunities, the Savior will not furnish Him with another which he would have treated in the same manner. He answers him nothing and by so doing answered him terribly.

Beware how you use opportunities. Dear Hearers, beware how you use your Sabbaths. There may come a day when you would give a thousand worlds for another Sabbath, but it shall be denied you. There may come a day when you would count out all your wealth to have another invitation to Christ, but it will be denied you, for you must die and the voice of Mercy will never ring in your ears again! They that will not when they may, shall not when they could! Many will knock after the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door. But when He shuts, no man opens.

The door was shut on Herod.

Observe that our Master had good reason for refusing to speak to Herod this time, over and above what I have mentioned—because He would not have it supposed that He yielded to the pomp and dignity of men! Jesus never refused an answer to the question of a beggar, but He would not gratify the curiosity of a king. Herod dreams that he has a right to ask whatever impertinent questions he may choose to invent, but Jesus knows nothing of men's rights in such a matter—it is all Grace with Him— and to Him the prince upon the throne is not an atom better than the peasant in the cottage! And so when Herod, in all his pride and glory thinks full sure that Christ will pay deference to him and, perhaps, will pay him court to win his favor, Jesus disregards him!

He wants nothing of the murderer of John the Baptist! Had Herod been the poorest and most loathsome leper throughout all Judea. Had he been the meanest beggar in the street who was lame or blind, his voice would at once been heard by the Lord of Mercy! But He will not answer the prince who hopes for homage at His hands, nor feed the idle wishes of a crafty reprobate! What favor did He need at Herod's hand? He had not come to be set free—He had come to die and, therefore, His face is set like a flint, and, with heroic courage, He answers him not a word. Now, then, you have seen frivolous curiosity at its best and you have seen it disappointed, as it generally is to this day. If people come to hear the Gospel out of this frivolous curiosity, they usually retire saying, "Really, I do not see anything in it. We have heard nothing eloquent, nothing profound, nothing outrageous."

Just so. There is nothing in the Gospel to please the luxurious, though everything to bless the poor! Jesus answered Herod nothing and He will answer you nothing if you are of Herod's order. It is the doom of triflers that they should get no answer from the Gospel! Neither the Scriptures, nor the ministry, nor the Spirit of God, nor the Lord Jesus will speak with them. What was the result of this disappointment upon Herod? Idle curiosity curdles into derision. He thinks Jesus is a fool, if not an idiot, and he says so and begins to deride Him. With his men of war he mocks Him and "set Him at naught," which signifies to make nothing of Him. He calls his soldiers and says, "Look at this creature—He will not answer a word to what I have to say—is He bereft of His senses? Wake Him up and see."

Then they mock and laugh and jest and jeer. "Here," says Herod, "He calls Himself a King! Bring out one of my shining white robes and put it on Him! We will make a King of Him." So they put it about His blessed Person and again heap insults upon Him. Was it not strange—this decking Him in a gorgeous robe of dazzling white? The mediaeval writers delight to dwell on the fact that Herod arrayed our Lord in white and afterwards Pilate clothed Him in red. Is He not the Lily of the valley and the Rose of Sharon? Is He not matchlessly white for innocence and then gloriously red in His atoning blood? Thus, in their very mockery, they are unconsciously setting forth to us both His spotless holiness and His majestic royalty!

When they had insulted to their full, they sent Him back to Pilate, kicking Him from foot to foot at their pleasure, as if He were a football for their sport. Then our Lord made His fourth sorrowful march through the streets of the city over which He had wept. That is what idlers in the long run do with Christ—in their disappointment they grow weary of Him and His Gospel and they cry, "Put Him away; there is nothing in Him, nothing of what we looked for, nothing to satisfy curiosity, nothing sensational; take Him away!" Away goes Jesus, never to return, and that is the end of

Herod and the end of a great many more.

II. My time is nearly gone, but bear with me while, for a few minutes, I try to set forth JESUS IN THE PRESENCE OF HEROD. Although no blows are recorded, I greatly question whether our Divine Master suffered anywhere more than He did in the palace of Herod. You and I, perhaps, apprehend most easily the woe of the coarser sufferings when they scourged Him and when they plaited the crown of thorns and put it upon His head. But the delicate and sensitive mind of our Master was, perhaps, more touched by what He suffered in the palace of Herod than by the rougher torture. For, first, here is a Man fully in earnest for the salvation of our souls—and in the midst of His grievous passion He is looked upon as a mountebank and a mere performer who is expected to work a miracle for the amusement of an impious court.

How it cuts an earnest man to the quick when he finds that, let him do what he may, people do not sympathize with him in earnest, but are coolly criticizing his style, or imitating his mannerisms, or admiring his expressions as matters of literary taste. It is heart-breaking, when your ardor makes you self-forgetful, to find others pecking at trifles, or making your efforts into a kind of show. The Christ must have been wounded in His very soul when He was treated as a mere performer—as if He had left the Father's bosom and was about to give Himself to death and yet was aiming to amuse or to astonish! I know how it saddens my Lord's servants when they preach their very hearts out, to bring men to repentance, and the only result is to elicit the remark that, "His arguments were very telling and that pathetic passage was very fine." There is a thorn in such chill words to pierce deeper than the crown of thorns! Horrible indifference smites like the Roman scourge.

Then to think of our Lord's being questioned by such a fop as Herod! A Man of earnest and intense soul, living for one thing only, and that the redemption of mankind—is here worried by the foolish questions of a man of the world! Were you ever in an agony of bodily pain, yourself, and did some frivolous person call upon you and begin to torture you with the most wicked nonsense and absurdities? Have you not felt that his chatter was worse than the pain? It must have been so with Jesus. When the ridiculous must question the sublime, the result is misery! With the bloody sweat yet damp upon His brow and with the accursed spit still defacing His blessed Countenance, the Man of Sorrows must be tortured by the driveling of a heartless idler! With His heart all bowed down under a sense of the awful penalty of sin, the great Substitute for sinners must be molested by the petty small talk and ribald jests of the meanest of mankind!

Solving eternal problems and building up an Everlasting Temple unto the living God, He must be twitted by a vainglorious tetrarch; tormented and tortured by foolish questions fit only to be asked of an impostor. We think the Cross, itself, was not a worse instrument of torture than the haughty tongue of this debauched monarch! Then the ribaldry of the whole thing must have tortured our Lord. The whole of them gathered round about Him with their hoarse laughter and coarse jests. He has become a byword and a proverb to them. When you are merry, you can enjoy merriment, but when the heart is sad, laughter is wretchedly discordant and embitters your grief. Now this one laughs and then another sneers—while a third thrusts out the tongue and they are all uproariously jovial! In harmony they are all making nothing of Him, though with awful earnestness He is lifting the world out of the slough of despair and hanging it in its place, again, among the stars of Glory!

Jesus was performing more than Herculean labors and these little beings, like so many gnats and flies, were stinging Him! Small things are great at torturing and these worthless beings did their utmost to torment our Lord. Oh, the torture of the Master's spirit! Remember, it was no small sorrow to our Lord to be silent. You tell me that He appears majestic in His silence? It is so, but the pain of it was acute. Can you speak well? Do you love to speak for the good of your fellow men and do you know that when you speak, full often your words are spirit and life to those who hear you? It will be very hard to feel compelled to refuse them a good word. Do not imagine that the Lord despised Herod as Herod despised the Lord. Ah, no! The pity of His soul went out to this poor frivolous creature who must make sport of the Savior's sufferings and treat the Son of the Highest as though He were a court fool who must play before him.

The Savior's infinite love was breaking His heart, for He longed to bless His persecutor and yet He must not speak, nor give forth a warning word. True, there was little need for words, for His very Presence was a sermon which ought to have melted a heart of stone—but yet it cost the Savior a mighty effort to keep down the floodgates and hold in the blessed torrents of His holy speech which would have flowed out in compassionate pleading. Silent He must be, but the anguish of it, I can scarcely tell. Sometimes to be permitted to speak a word is the greatest comfort you can have. Have you ever been in such a state that if you could cry out it would have been a relief to you? What anguish, then, to be forced to be as a dumb man! What woe to be forced to be silent with all these mockers about Him and yet to be pitying them all!

As a man might pity a moth that flies into the flame of the candle and will not be delivered, so did our Lord pity these creatures. How sad that they could make sport of their own damnation, fling the salvation of God to the ground and tread it down as swine tread down their husks! Oh, it grieved the Master's heart! It moved His soul to its very center. Think of the utter contempt that was poured upon Him. I do not judge that this was the bitterest of His woes, for their contempt was an honor to Him. But it was one ingredient of His cup of mingled wormwood and gall that they should so despise Him as to clothe Him in a white robe and mock His kingship—when on that kingship their only hope was hung! They "set Him at naught," that is, put Him down as nothing, jeered and jested at Him— and if there was nothing, even, about His Manhood which they could respect—they invented ways by which they could pour scorn upon Him.

Luke is the Gospel of the Man—if you want to read about Jesus in His Manhood, read Luke—and there you will see how His very Manhood was trampled in the mire by these inhuman creatures who found their joy in despising Him! See, then, your Lord and Master, and let me put two or three questions to you. Do you not think that this peculiar silence of Jesus was a part of His anguish in which He was bearing the punishment for your sins of the tongue? Ah me, ah me! Redeemed of the Lord, how often have you misused your speech by wanton words! How often have we uttered murmuring words, proud words, false words, words of despite to holy things—and now our sins of the tongue are all coming upon Jesus and He must stand silent and bear our penalty!

And is it not possible that when they put the gorgeous robe upon Him, He was bearing your sins of vanity, your sins of dress and pride when you made yourselves glorious to behold and arrayed yourselves in gorgeous robes and glittering apparel? Know you not that these things are your shame? For had you had no sin, you would have needed none of these poor rags—and may not the Christ in white and red be bearing your sins of folly? And do you not think that when they were

making Him nothing and despising Him, He was, then, bearing our sins when we set Him at naught with our words of despite and derision—and when, perhaps, in our ungodly days we, too, made sport of holy things and jested at the Word of God? Ah me, I think it was so and I ask you to look at Him and say as you see Him there, "It is not Herod after all! It is my tongue, my vanity, my trifling with holy things which caused Him this exquisite torture! Lord Jesus, Substitute for me, let all these transgressions of mine be put away once and for all by Your meritorious passion."

Finally, we read that Herod and Pilate were made friends from that day on and I hope if there are any here that are true-hearted Christians, if they have had any ill-will towards one another, they will think it a great shame that Herod and Pilate should be friends and that any two followers of Jesus should not be friends at the sight of the suffering Master! As for those two foxes, Pilate and Herod, they were tied, tail to tail, that day by our great Samson! Our Lord has often been a point of union for wicked men—not by His intent and purpose—but because they have joined together to oppose Him. I have often smiled in my heart to see how superstition and skepticism will march together when they are anxious to oppose the Gospel. Then the Sadducee says, "Give me your hand, dear Pharisee. We have a common interest here, for this Man would overturn us all." The Gospel is the mortal enemy both of the skeptical Sadducee and the superstitious Pharisee—and so they lay aside their differences to assail it.

Now, then, if the wicked unite before our Lord Jesus when He wears the white robe, should not His people much more be united, especially when they remember that He said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another." I charge you by your homage to Him you call Master and Lord, if you have any difference of any sort with any Christian Brother or Sister, let not yon sun go down till you have ended it by hearty love for Jesus' sake! Let it be seen that Christ is the great Uniter of all those who are in Him. He would have us love one another even as He has loved us! And His prayer is that we may be one. May the Lord hear that prayer and make us one in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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Luke 23,27-31 #1320 - Why Should I Weep

WHY SHOULD I WEEP?

NO. 1320

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22, 1876,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women,

which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus

turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not

for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

For behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are

the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains,

Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

For if they do these things in a green tree,

what shall be done in the dry?"

Luke 23:27-31.

CAN you picture the scene? Jesus is given up by Pilate to the Jews that

they may do their will with Him and, led by a small band of soldiers, He is conducted into the public street, bearing His Cross upon His shoulders. Perhaps they judged Him to be weary with His night of watching and worn with His suffering from the scourge, and they feared lest He might die upon the road and, therefore, with a cruel mercy, they laid hold upon one in the crowd who had too loudly expressed His sympathy, impressed him into military service and compelled him to assist in carrying the instrument of execution. You see the haughty scribes and the ribald throng— but the center of the spectacle, and the cause of it all was our Lord Himself—Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

We cannot paint Him. All who have ever attempted to do so have, to a large extent, been unsuccessful, for there was upon His face a mingled majesty and meekness, loveliness and lowliness, sanctity and sorrow which it would not be possible to express upon canvas or to represent in words. About His Person there were abundant marks of cruelty. He had been scourged. Everyone could see it. His own garments, which they had put upon Him, could not

conceal the marks of the Roman lash. The traces of the crown of thorns were on His brow and the rough treatment of the soldiers had left its tokens, too, so that His visage was more marred than that of any man. And His form more than the sons of men.

And now He is being led away to be put to the shameful death of the Cross. There were some glad eyes there, delighted that, at last, their victim was in their power and that the eloquent tongue which had exposed their hypocrisy would now be silenced in death. There, too, were the unfeeling Romans, to whom human life was a trifle. And all around, gathered in dense masses, the brutal mob, bribed to shout against their best Friend. But all then present were not in this savage mood. There were some—and to the honor of the sex it is recorded that they were women— who entered their protest by their cries and lamentations. Not silently in their sorrow did they weep, but they began to lament aloud and bewail audibly, as though they were attending the funeral of some dear friend, or expected the death of one of their kindred. The voice of a woman's weeping has great power with most of us, but it would not stir the stony hearts of Roman legionaries. The wail of women was no more to them than the moaning of the winds among the forest trees! Yet it must have struck many of the less stern and stolid mold and filled their souls with some measure of kindred feeling. Chiefly, however, did it strike One, the most tender hearted among them all, One whose ear was delicately sensitive to every sound of sorrow.

And though He had not answered Herod and had given Pilate but a few words of reply. And though amidst all the mockeries and scourging He had been as dumb as a sheep before her shearers, yet He paused and, looking round upon the weeping company, piteously, yet sublimely broke the silence by saying to them, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." As for the words, themselves, they are especially noteworthy, because they constitute the last connected discourse of the Savior before He died. All that He said afterwards was fragmentary and mainly of the nature of prayer. A sentence to John and to His mother, and to the dying thief. Just a word or two looking downward, but for the most part He uttered broken sentences which flew upwards on the wings of strong desire.

This was His last address, a farewell sermonette delivered amid surroundings most sad and solemn, restraining tears and yet, at the same time, causing them to flow. We reckon the words to be all the more weighty and full of solemnity because of the occasion, but even apart from this, the truths delivered were, in themselves, of the utmost importance and solemnity. This last discourse of our Lord before His death was terribly prophetic to a world rejecting Him—portentous of a thousand woes to a people whom He loved—woes which even He could not avert because they had rejected His interposition and refused the mercy which He came to bring. "Daughters of Jerusalem," said He, "weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."

Not many hours before, He had, Himself, set them the example by weeping over the doomed city, and crying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!" Looking even upon the surface of the words you will perceive that they bear His undoubted image and superscription. Who but He would have spoken after this sort? You are sure that the passage is genuine, for it is, in all respects, so inimitably Christ-like. See how self-oblivious He was—for Himself He asks not even tears of sympathy. Was there no cause for grief? Yes, cause enough, and yet He says, "Weep not for Me,

but weep for yourselves," as if all His thoughts were taken up with other griefs than His own and He would not have a tear wasted upon Him, but spent on woes which grieved Him more than His own pangs.

Observe the majesty of the speech, too, steeped as the speaker was in misery. You can see that His is sorrow which well deserved to be wept over, but He is not overcome by it, but rather His royal soul reigns in the future. And as a King, He anticipates His scepter and His Judgment Seat and foretells the doom of those who now insult Him. Here is no cowardly spirit, no confession of defeat, no appeal for pity, no shadow of petty resentment, but on the contrary, a majestic consciousness of strength! With His calm, prophetic eye, He looks beyond the intervening years and sees Jerusalem besieged and captured. He speaks as though He heard the awful shrieks which betokened the entrance of the Romans into the city and the smiting down of young and old, women and children.

No, mark how His piercing eyes see yet further—He beholds and describes the day when He shall sit upon the Throne of Judgment and summon all men to His bar. When He who was, then, the weary Man before His foes should alarm the ungodly by the appearance of His Countenance, so that they would call to the mountains to fall upon them and to the rocks to hide them from His face! He speaks as if conscious of the majesty that would be upon Him in that dreadful day and yet, at the same time, pitiful towards those who, by their sins, were bringing upon themselves so terrible a doom! He says, in effect, "Weep for those concerning whom it would have been better that they had never been born, and for whom annihilation would be a consummation devoutly to be wished."

He dries up the tears which were flowing for Himself, that the women may draw up the sluices of their souls and let the torrents of their grief flow forth for impenitent sinners who will be filled with unutterable dismay at His Second Coming. May the Holy Spirit help me while handling this awful subject! The text very readily divides itself into two parts. The one may be headed, "Weep not." The other, "Weep." The first is, "Weep not," or what the Savior suggested. The second is, "Weep," or what the Savior commanded.

I. He said to the weeping women, "WEEP NOT." There are some cold, calculating expositors who make it out that our Lord reproved these women for weeping and that there was something wrong, or, if not altogether wrong, yet something very far from commendable in their sorrow. I think they call it, "the sentimental sympathy," of these kind souls. There is no being much more unnatural than a cold-blooded commentator who bites at every letter and nibbles at the grammatical meaning of every syllable, translating with his lexicon, but never exercising common sense, or allowing even the least play to his heart.

Blame these women? No! Bless them again and again! It was the one redeeming trait in the dread march along the Via Dolorosa! Let it not be dreamed that Jesus could have censured those who wept for Him! No! No! No—a thousand times, No! These gentle women appear in a happy contrast to the chief priests with their savage malice, and to the thoughtless multitude with their fierce cry of, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" They seem, to me, to have shown a noble courage in daring to express their sympathy with One whom everybody else hunted to death with such ferocity. To espouse His cause amid those hoarse cries of, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," was courage more than manly! Those women were heroines more valiant than those who rush upon the spoil. Those lamentations, in sympathy with Him who was being led to die, are worthy of our praise and not of

our criticism!

Our Lord accepted the sympathy they evinced and it was only His great disinterested unselfishness which made Him say, "Spare your griefs for other sorrows." It was not because they were wrong, but because there was something still more necessary to be done than even to weep for Him. I do not think we erred when we sang just now—

"A moment give loose to grief,

Let grateful sorrows rise, And wash the bloody stains away With torrents from your eyes."

Have we not all felt it to be a gracious exercise to sing in unison that almost dirge—

"Oh come and mourn with me awhile;

Oh come to the Savior's side; Oh come, together let us mourn: Jesus, our Lord, is crucified. Have we no tears to shed for Him, While soldiers scoff and Jews deride? Ah! Look how patiently He hangs; Jesus, our Lord, is crucified"?

Who among us, for words like these, can blame Dr. Watts and others when they sing—

"Thus might I hide my blushing face, While His dear Cross appears, Dissolve my heart in thankfulness, And melt my eyes to tears"?

There can be nothing ill about the weeping of these women and, therefore, let us proceed to say, first, that their sorrow was legitimate and wellgrounded. There was reason for their weeping! They saw Him suffering, friendless and hunted to death—they could not but bewail Him!

Had I been there and seen Him all alone, and marked the cruel eyes that watched Him, and heard the malicious voices which assailed Him, I, too, must have wept! I hope I am not so past feeling as to have looked on without overflowing sorrow. See those bleeding shoulders, those lacerated temples—mark, above all, that quiet, unrivalled God-like Countenance, so marred with sacred grief! One must have wept, surely, if one had a heart anywhere within him, to think that He who suffered thus, and was about to suffer so much more, should be so gentle and so unresisting! Was not this cause for intense sympathy? He was meek and lowly in heart and, therefore, He returned none of those fierce looks and answered none of those ferocious words.

He was like a lamb in the midst of wolves, or a dove surrounded by a thousand hawks, or a milk-white hare amid baying hounds! There was none to pity and none to help! Shall we, then, refuse our compassion? No! You women's eyes, you did well to weep—how could you help it, since you were mothers of children and, therefore, had hearts to love? How could you help weeping for Him who was so lowly, so gentle, so unselfish, so submissive to all they put upon Him? Surely it was a superfluity of malice to be hunting Him to death who, even in life, was so much the Man of Sorrows! And then He was so innocent and pure! What had He done amiss? They could not answer Pilate's challenge—"Why, what evil has He done?" There was no fault in Him, they could not find any!

You could see by the very look of Him that He was the purest of all mankind—that all around Him was sin and vanity—yet He, alone, was Holiness and Truth! Why, then, should they lead Him forth among malefactors and nail those blessed hands and feet to the wood and hang Him to a tree?

Above all, in addition to His being innocent of fault, He had been so full of kindness—of more than kindness—of infinite love to all mankind and even in His deepest sorrow boundless benevolence shone in His Countenance, beaming as the sun! He looked upon His enemies and His glance was royal but it was tender, too. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was trembling on His lips. He would not harm them. Not He! He would not curse them though His curse had withered them, nor even frown upon them, though that frown might have secured His liberation! He was too good to render evil for evil!

These women remembered what a life He had led. They remembered how He had fed the hungry—perhaps some of them had even eaten of the loaves and fishes. They remembered how He had healed their children, raised their dead and had dislodged foul fiends from the bodies of their friends. He had preached openly in their streets and He had never taught ill will, but always gentleness and love. He had been popular and stood at the head of the multitude at one time, but He had never used His power for selfish purposes. He had ridden through their streets in pomp, but the pomp was simple and homely—on a colt, the foal of an ass had He ridden with children for His courtiers—and with no sound of the trumpets of war, but only with the children's cries of, "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."

Why should they crucify Him? He had done nothing but good! His noble Presence seemed to appeal to the women and they asked each other, "For which of His works would they slay Him? For which of His actions would they put Him to death?" He, the Friend of the friendless, why should He die? I cannot, I say again, but commend the tears of these women! It is little marvel that they should weep and bewail when they saw the Innocent One about to die. I think, too, that this weeping on the part of the women was a very hopeful emotion. It was far better, certainly, than the nonemotion or the cruelty of those who formed that motley throng. It showed some tenderness of heart, and tenderness of heart, though it is but natural, may often serve as a groundwork upon which better and holier and more spiritual feelings may be placed.

It is objected that persons weep when they hear the story of other griefs besides those of Jesus and I am glad they do. Should they not weep with them that weep? It is also objected that this natural sympathy may, in many cases, be as much due to the skill of the orator as in others it is the undoubted result of the music of the oratorio. I know it is so. I am going to show you that mere emotional sympathy is not all, nor a half, nor a tenth of what is needed. Still, I should be sorry if I thought myself capable of remembering the griefs of Jesus without emotion while other men's woes affected me. And I should greatly deplore the fact if it were, indeed, true that you were all, especially you women, so hardened that you could think of Jesus of Nazareth bleeding and dying without your hearts beginning to melt.

The emotion is good, at any rate, so far that if it were absent you would be bereft of humanity and turned to stones. It is hopeful because it opens a door through which something better may enter. This tenderness is a natural stock suitable for grafting something far higher upon. He who can weep for the sorrows of Christ may soon be on the road towards weeping over the sin which caused the sorrow, or he may be on the highway towards being able to lament, as Christ bids men lament, those other griefs and miseries which sin brings upon themselves and upon their children. I would not carry the emotional towards Christ to an excess, nor ask men to make Jesus' death only a fountain of sorrow, since it is also a source of joy. I would deplore that idolatrous emotion

which weeps before a hideous image, or mourns over touching a picture. But still, I would not have men, at the thought of Jesus dying, act as if they were sticks and stones, but prove that they mourn for Him whom they have pierced.

Having said this much, we now add that on our Lord's part, such sorrow was fitly repressed, because, after all, though naturally good, it is not more than natural, and falls short of spiritual excellence. It is no proof of the work of the Spirit upon your heart that you weep as you hear the story of Christ's death, for probably you would have been even more affected had you seen a murderer hanged. It is no proof that you are truly saved because you are moved to great emotions whenever you hear the details of the Crucifixion, for the Bulgarian atrocities excited you equally as much. I think it good that you should be moved, as I have said before, but it is only naturally and not spiritually good.

Doubtless there are many who have shed more tears over the silly story of a love-sick Mal. in a frivolous novel than they have ever given to the story of the Lover of our souls. Though they have felt emotion when they have pictured the sufferings of Emmanuel, they have felt even more when the bewitching pen of fiction has sketched some imaginary picture of fancied woes. No, no, these natural sympathies are not to be commended so that we wish you to be continually exercised with them! Our Lord did well to give them healthy bounds. Besides, such feeling is generally very evanescent. Tears of mere emotion, because of the external sufferings of Christ, are speedily wiped away and forgotten.

We do not know that any of these women ever became our Lord's converts. Among those who met in the upper room we do not know that any had taken part with this company of weepers. These were women of Jerusalem and the followers of Christ at His death, who ministered unto Him, were generally women from Galilee. For this see Matthew 27:54-56. I fear that the most of these Jerusalem sympathizers forgot tomorrow that they had wept today. I may be mistaken, but there is nothing in the mere fact of their lamenting the Savior's doom which would prove them to be His regenerated followers. The morning cloud and the early dew are fit emblems of such fleeting emotions.

Such weeping, too, is morally powerless—it has no effect upon the mind. It does not change the character. It does not cause the putting away of sin, nor create real and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Many tears are shed under powerful sermons that are so much wasted fluid—when the discourse is over, the sorrow has ceased. There was no work of Grace upon the inner heart, it was all surface work and no more. The worst of it is, such feeling is often deceptive, for people are apt to think, "I must have something good in me, for what a time of weeping I had under the sermon and how tender I felt when I heard the description of Christ upon the Cross!"

Yes, and thus you may wrap yourself up in the belief that you are under the influence of the Holy Spirit when, after all, it is only ordinary human feeling. You may conclude, "Surely these drops come from a heart of flesh," when it may be only moisture condensed upon a heart of stone! This feeling, too, may stand in the way of something a great deal better. Jesus would not have these women weep for one thing, because they were to weep for another thing which far more seriously demanded their weeping! You need not weep because Christ died one-tenth as much as because your sins rendered it necessary that He should die! You need not weep over the Crucifixion, but weep over your transgressions, for your sins nailed the Redeemer to the accursed tree!

To weep over a dying Savior is to lament the remedy—it were wiser to bewail the disease. To weep over the dying Savior is to wet the surgeon's knife with tears—it were better to bewail that spreading polyp which that knife must cut away! To weep over the Lord Jesus as He goes to the Cross is to weep over that which is the subject of the highest joy that ever Heaven and earth have known! Your tears are scarcely needed there—they are natural—but a deeper wisdom will make you brush them all away and chant with joy His victory over death and the grave! If we must continue our sad emotions, let us lament that we should have broken the Law which He thus painfully vindicated. Let us mourn that we should have incurred the penalty which He, even to the death, was made to endure.

Jesus wished them not so much to look at His outward sufferings as at the secret inward cause of that outward sorrow, namely, the transgression and the iniquity of His people which had laid the Cross upon His shoulders and surrounded Him with enemies! As I quoted, just now, certain verses which led us to lament our Lord, let me propose to you as better, still, those words of Watts—

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins, His chief tormentors were! Each of my crimes became a nail, And unbelief the spear. 'Twas you that pulled the vengeance down Upon His guiltless head: Break, break, my heart, oh burst my eyes! And let my sorrows bleed. Strike, mighty Grace, my flinty soul, Till melting waters flow, And deep repentance drowns my eyes In sorrow and in woe."

II. Now we pass on from, "Weep not," to, "WEEP." May God the Holy Spirit help us to dwell upon that for a while with profit to our souls. Though Jesus stops one channel for tears, he opens another and a wider one. Let us look to it. First, when He said, "Weep for yourselves," He meant that they were to lament and bewail the sin which had brought Him where He was, seeing He had come to suffer for it. And He would have them weep because that sin would bring them and their children into yet deeper woe.

You know that just before He uttered this remarkable saying, the husbands, the fathers and the sons of those women had been crying with loud voices, "Let Him be crucified," and when Pilate had taken water and washed his hands to show that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, they had imprecated upon their nation, and upon their unborn sons, the curse which follows from such a deed. "Then answered all the people, His blood be on us and on our children." And though these women lamented and mourned, yet over their heads, the men who had spoken for the nation had gathered the thunder cloud of Divine Wrath! Jesus points to it and says, "Weep for the national sin, weep for the national curse which will surely come upon you, because you are putting the Just One to death."

Yes, deeper, still, was His meaning, for all those about Him were, in a sense, guilty of His death. And you, and I, and all the rest of mankind have been, in our measure, the cause of the Savior's Crucifixion. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, this is the reason why we should weep—because we have broken the Divine Law and rendered it impossible that we should be saved except Jesus Christ should die! If we have not believed in Jesus Christ, we have this cause for lamentation—that our sin abides upon us at this present moment! That curse which crushed the Savior down till He cried, Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani, is resting upon some who are here this morning!

O Souls, you need not pity the dying Christ, but pity yourselves! On your own selves your sin is resting! And your children growing up unconverted, hardened in rebellion against God by your

example—their sin is resting upon them, too, and this is the overflowing cause why you should weep! And you Believers, you from whom sin has been lifted, who are forgiven for His name's sake—yet lament that you should have sinned—and with your joy for pardoned guilt mourn that Christ had to carry the burden which you heaped together and to bear the penalty which you deserved! All round, Brothers and Sisters, there is abounding cause for sorrow for sin—a sweet sorrow from the Lord's people and a bitter sorrow from those who have no part nor lot in the result of Christ's passion as yet, but who, nevertheless, are partakers in the crime which slew the Son of God!

I beg you, now, to look again into the reason why our Lord bade them weep. It was, first, for their sin, but it was next for the impending punishment of their sins. The punishment of the national sin of the Jew was to be the scattering of his nation and the total destruction of its holy city! And well does our Savior speak of it in terrible language, for under all Heaven and in all history there never was such a scene of misery as the siege and destruction of Jerusalem! I need not give you any outline of it because you must be familiar with that painful subject where every horror seems to be combined in one and exaggerated to the utmost! Nothing has ever surpassed it! I question if anything ever equaled it. But our Lord, as I have hinted, looked further than the Roman sword and the massacre of the Jews. Often, in His preaching, you do not know whether He is talking of the siege of Jerusalem or of the Judgment Day, for the one was on His mind such a foreshadowing, rehearsal and type of the other—so that in His language He often seemed to melt the two into one. He means to you and to me, this morning, to speak, not of besieged Jerusalem, but of that Day of Wrath, that dreadful day—what man among us shall be able to abide its coming? There is surely cause enough for weeping, for when that day comes it will find some men in such a state that it would have been better for them that they had never been born!

When the dreadful sentence shall come from the Judge, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels," they will bless the barren womb and the breast at which no child has sucked! Then will impenitent sinners bitterly exclaim, "Cursed be the day when I was born! Let not the day when my mother bore me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto you; making him very glad." They will wring their hands in anguish and curse their existence and wish that they had never seen the light! So terrible will the doom of the wicked be, that mothers who looked upon the birth of their children as the consummation of their joy, shall wish they had been barren and never carried a babe at their breasts! They shall count those happy who were childless, whom, perhaps in their hearts, in their past lives they despised. Existence is, in itself, a blessing— but what shall be the misery which shall make men wish that they had never breathed? Yet, alas, such is the condition of multitudes while I am speaking to you, and such will soon be the condition of some who are looking into my face now, unless they repent! Alas! Alas! Weep for yourselves and for your children!

Further, our Lord went on, with that melting voice of His, in overflowing grief to say that they might reserve their tears for those who would, before long, wish to be annihilated, but wish in vain. "Then shall men begin to say to the rocks, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us." The falling of the mountain would grind them to powder and they wish for that! The descent of the hill upon them would bury them in a deep abyss and they would rather be immured in the bowels of the earth forever than have to look upon the face of the Great Judge! They ask to be crushed outright, or to be buried alive sooner than to feel the punishment of their sins!

Then shall be fulfilled the Word of the Lord by His servant, John, "And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them" (Revelation 9:6). Ah, Sirs, extinction is a blessing too great to be permitted to the ungodly! Earth will have no heart of compassion for the men who polluted her and rejected her Lord. The mountains will reply, "We fall at God's bidding, not at the petition of His enemies," and the hills, in their stolid silence, will answer, "We cannot, and we would not if we could, conceal you from the Justice which you, yourselves, willfully provoked." No, there shall be no refuge for them, no annihilation into which they can fly! The very hope of it were Heaven to the damned. Oh, could they but expect it! But it must not, shall not be. Their cry for extinction shall be in vain. Now, if you have tears for Jesus dying, reserve them for those to whom death is but the beginning of evils! If you have griefs for Him to whom they said, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the paps that gave You suck," have still more tears for those who shall curse the hour in which they were conceived! Here is, indeed, a subject which demands the tears of nations and of ages—souls lost beyond all remedy, seeking destruction, itself, as a blessing and beginning petitions of unutterable anguish which shall never cease and never be put into use! Then our Lord goes on to draw a wonderful parallel and contrast between His sufferings and those to be lamented, for He says, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall they do in the dry?" I suppose He meant, "If I, who am no rebel against Caesar, suffer so, how will those suffer whom the Romans take in actual rebellion at the siege of Jerusalem?"

And He meant, next, to say, "If I who am perfectly innocent, must nevertheless be put to such a death as this, what will become of the guilty?" If when fires are raging in the forest, the green trees, full of sap and moisture, crackle like stubble in the flame, how will the old dry trees burn which are already rotten to the core and turned to touchwood—and so prepared as fuel for the furnace? If Jesus suffers, who has no sin, but is full of the life of innocence and the sap of holiness, how will they suffer who have long been dead in sin and are rotten with iniquity? As Peter puts it in another place, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins with us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Note well that the sufferings of our Lord, though in some respects far beyond all conceivable woes, have yet some points about them in which they differ with advantage from the miseries of lost souls. For, first, our Lord knew that He was innocent and, therefore, His righteousness upheld Him. Whatever He suffered, He knew that He deserved none of it. He had no stings of conscience, nor agonies of remorse. Now, the sting of future punishment will lie in the indisputable conviction that it is well deserved. If there were one woe in Hell more than a lost soul deserved, it would act as an opiate to its pain—but the justice of every infliction will be the tooth of the worm, the edge of the sword. No dream of innocence, or conceit of self-righteousness will survive the Judgment Day—conscience will be awakened and armed to do its work—the wicked will perceive their guilt and cling to it and this will make their punishment the more severe. The finally impenitent will be tormented by their own passions which will rage within them like an inward Hell.

But our Lord had none of this! There was no evil in Him, no lusting after evil, no self-seeking, no rebellion of heart, no anger or discontent. A man in whom there is no evil passion to stir up cannot know those fierce pangs and wild throes with which raging sin feeds the soul. Pride, ambition, greed, malice, revenge—these are the fuel of Hell's fire. Men's selves, not devils, are their

tormentors! Their inward lusts are worms that never die and fires that never can be quenched! There could be none of this in our Divine Lord. Again, lost souls hate God and love sin, but Christ ever loved God and hated sin. Now, to love evil is misery when undisguised and rightly understood sin is Hell. It is love of evil continued in the soul which causes the perpetuity of the lost estate of men. But the holy Jesus, though suffering beyond all conception, could not feel the pangs which come of hating good and loving evil. He was the green tree and the ungodly are the dry trees. Yet if the Innocent One suffers so, with what pains will guilty souls be racked by their avenging consciences? Our Lord Jesus knew that every pang He suffered was for the good of others—He endured cheerfully because He saw that He was redeeming a multitude that no man can number from going down to the Pit. But there is no redeeming power about the sufferings of the lost—they are not helping anyone, nor achieving a benevolent design.

The great God has good designs in their punishment, but they are strangers to any such a purpose. Our Lord had a reward before Him because of which He endured the Cross, despising the shame. But the finally condemned have no prospect of reward nor hope of rising from their doom. How can they expect either? He was full of hope, they are full of despair. "It is finished" was, for Him, but there is no, "It is finished" for them. Their sufferings, moreover, are self-caused—their sin was their own. He endured agonies because others had transgressed and He willed to save them. Their sufferings are self-chosen, for they would not be persuaded to forsake their sins. But He, from necessity of love, was made to bleed—the cup could not pass from Him if His people were not redeemed.

The torments of the lost will be self-inflicted—they are suicides to their souls—the venom in their veins is self-created and self-injected. They torment themselves with sin to which they cleave, but it pleased the Father to bruise the Son—but the necessity for His bruising lay not in Himself, but in others. Now, dear Friends, I think I have said enough on this painful matter to assure you that the most terrible warning to impenitent men in all the world is the death of Christ. For if God spared not His own Son, on whom was only laid imputed sin, will He spare sinners whose sins are actual and their own? If He smote Him to the death who only stood in the sinner's place, will He let the impenitent sinner go free? If He who always did His Father's will and was obedient even unto death, must be forsaken of God, what will become of those who reject Christ and live and die enemies to the Most High?

Here is cause for weeping! And, very solemnly would I say it, God help me to say it so that you may feel it—the most dreadful thought is that perhaps we, ourselves, are in the condition of guiltiness before God and are hastening on to the judgment which Christ has foretold! Oh, think if within the next six months—no, stretch it as far as you like—if within the next 50 years some of us should be asking the hills to cover us and wishing that we never had been born? What an awful prospect! And yet, unless we are renewed in heart and made Believers in Jesus Christ, that certainly must be our doom! Think of your children, too, who are growing up about you, capable of understanding and responsible for their actions. Oh, if they live as they now live, and die as they now are, you may wish they had never been given to you and had never borne your name! Think of this and weep! Dear Friends, if the Lord would put you into a right state of heart, you would scarcely think of an unconverted person's condition without the deepest pity. You would not hear an oath in the street without the tear starting in your eyes! That was a dreadful spectacle which I pictured to you just now—our Lord bearing His Cross and the women weeping. But how much

more awful is that before me! I see a soul carrying about itself the instrument of its own destruction and going onward with it to its doom! Sin is the cross to which the soul will be fastened and habits and depravities are the nails! The soul is bearing its sin and loving to bear it! Look, it is going to execution, but at each step it laughs! Every step it takes is bearing it towards Hell and yet it makes mirth! Lo, the infatuated one scoffs at the voice that warns him and every scoff he utters is increasing his guilt!

Look forward to his end, its never-ending end! Look forward to it steadily, with calm and tearful gaze—is it not an awful spectacle? But what if you should be beholding yourselves as in a vision, or seeing your child in the glass of prophecy! If it is your case, I beseech you, repent of your sins, bewail your condition and fly to Christ for shelter! And if it is your child, give Heaven no rest! Plead continually at the Throne of Grace till you have brought down a blessing from God upon your offspring! Never cease to pray until your sons and your daughters are safely landed on the Rock of Ages and so secured there that they will need no other rock to hide them in the day when Christ shall come.

I beseech you, beloved Christian Friends, ask for tenderness towards sinners, towards all sinners, and let your tenderness be shown in fervent prayer, in incessant effort and in holy sympathy towards the wandering ones. Alas, I have but stuttered and stammered compared with the manner in which I hoped to have spoken! I may have failed in expressing myself, but God can bless the word none the less! The subject is worthy of an angel's tongue! It needs Christ, Himself, to expound it completely. Would God He might, by His Spirit, expound it to your hearts in the leisure of this afternoon. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 23:1-31.

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Luke 23,34 #2263 - Christ's Plea for Ignorant Sinn

CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS

NO. 2263

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 3, 1892.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 5, 1890.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:34.

WHAT tenderness we have here; what self-forgetfulness; what almighty love! Jesus did not say to those who crucified Him, "Be gone!" One such word and they would have all fled. When they came to take Him in the garden, they went backward and fell to the ground when He spoke but a short sentence! And now that He is on the Cross, a single syllable would have made the whole company fall to the ground, or flee away in fright.

Jesus says not a word in His own defense. When He prayed to His Father, He might justly have said, "Father, note what they do to Your beloved Son. Judge them for the wrong they do to Him who loves them and who has done all He can for them." But there is no prayer against them in the words that Jesus utters. It was written of old, by the Prophet Isaiah, "He made intercession for the transgressors"—and here it is fulfilled! He pleads for His murderers, "Father, forgive them."

He does not utter a single word of upbraiding. He does not say, "Why do you do this? Why pierce the hands that fed you? Why nail the feet that followed after you in mercy? Why mock the Man who loved to bless you?" No, not a word, even, of gentle upbraiding, much less anything like a curse. "Father, forgive them." You notice Jesus does not say, "I forgive them," but you may read that between the lines. He says that all the more because He does not say it in words. But He had laid aside His majesty and is fastened to the Cross and, therefore, He takes the humble position of a suppliant, rather than the more lofty place of One who had power to forgive. How often, when men say, "I forgive you," is there a kind of selfishness about it? At any rate, self is asserted in the very act of forgiving. Jesus takes the place of a pleader, a pleader for those who were committing murder upon Himself. Blessed be His name!

This word on the Cross we shall use, tonight, and we shall see if we cannot gather something from it for our instruction, for, though we were not there and we did not actually put Jesus to death, yet we really caused His death—we, too, crucified the Lord of Glory and His prayer for us was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Volume 38 1I am not going to handle this text so much by way of exposition, as by way of experience. I believe there are many here to whom these words will be very appropriate. This will be our line of thought. First, we were, in a measure, ignorant. Secondly, we confess that this ignorance is no excuse. Thirdly, we bless our Lord for pleading for us and fourthly, we now rejoice in the pardon we have obtained. May the Holy Spirit graciously help us in our meditation!

I. Looking back upon our past experience, let me say, first, that WE WERE, IN A MEASURE, IGNORANT. We who have been forgiven, we who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, we once sinned in a great measure through ignorance. Jesus says, "They know not what they do." Now, I shall appeal to you, Brothers and Sisters—when you lived under the dominion of Satan and served yourselves and sin—was there not a measure of ignorance in it? You can truly say, as we said in the hymn we sang just now—

"Alas! I knew not what I did."

It is true, first, that we were ignorant of the awful meaning of sin. We began to sin as children—we knew that it was wrong, but we did not know all that sin meant. We went on to sin as young men—perhaps we plunged into much wickedness. We knew it was wrong, but we did not see the end from the beginning. It did not appear to us as rebellion against God. We did not think that we were presumptuously defying God, setting at nothing His wisdom, defying His power, deriding His love, spurning His holiness, yet we were. There is an abysmal depth in sin. You cannot see the bottom of it. When we rolled sin under our tongue as a sweet morsel, we did not know all the terrible ingredients compounded in that deadly bittersweet. We were, in a measure, ignorant of the tremendous crime we committed when we dared to live in rebellion against God. So far, I think, you are with me.

We did not know, at that time, God's great love for us. I did not know that He had chosen me from before the foundation of the world. I never dreamed of that! I did not know that Christ stood for me as my Substitute, to redeem me from among men. I did not know the love of Christ—did not understand it. You did not know that you were sinning against eternal Love, against infinite compassion, against a distinguishing Love such as God had fixed on you from eternity. So far, we knew not what we did.

I think, too, that we did not know all that we were doing in our rejection of Christ and putting Him to grief. He came to us in our youth and, impressed by a sermon, we began to tremble and to seek His face. But we were decoyed back to the world and we refused Christ. Our mother's tears, our father's prayers, our teacher's admonitions often moved us— but we were very stubborn and we rejected Christ. We did not know that, in that rejection, we were virtually putting Him away and crucifying Him! We were denying His Godhead, or else we would have worshipped Him. We were denying His love, or else we would have yielded to Him. We were practically, in every act of sin, taking the hammer and the nails and fastening Christ to the Cross, but we did not know it. Perhaps, if we had known it, we would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. We knew we were doing wrong, but we did not know all the wrong that we were doing.

Nor did we know fully the meaning of our delays. We hesitated—we were on the verge of conversion, but we went back and turned, again, to our old follies. We were hardened, Christless, still prayerless, and each of us said, "Oh, I am only waiting a little while till I have fulfilled my

present engagements, till I am a little older, till I have seen a little more of the world!" The fact is, we were refusing Christ and choosing the pleasures of sin instead of Him—and every hour of delay was an hour of crucifying Christ, grieving His Spirit and choosing this harlot world in the place of the lovely and ever-blessed Christ! We did not know that.

I think we may add one thing more. We did not know the meaning of our self-righteousness. We used to think, some of us, that we had a righteousness of our own. We had been to Church regularly, or we had been to the Meeting House whenever it was open. We were christened; we were confirmed, or, perhaps, we rejoiced that we never had either of those things done to us. Thus, we put our confidence in ceremonies, or the absence of ceremonies! We said our prayers; we read a chapter in the Bible night and morning. We did—oh, I do not know what we did not do! But there we rested—we were righteous in our own esteem. We had not any particular sin to confess, nor any reason to lie in the dust before the Throne of God's majesty. We were about as good as we could be and we did not know that we were, even, then, perpetrating the highest insult upon Christ, for, if we were not sinners, why did Christ die? And, if we had a righteousness of our own which was good enough, why did Christ come here to work out a righteousness for us?

We made Christ to be a superfluity, by considering that we were good enough without resting in His atoning Sacrifice. Ah, but we did not think we were doing that! We thought we were pleasing God by our religiousness, by our outward performances, by our ecclesiastical correctness! But all the while we were setting up antichrist in the place of Christ! We were making out that Christ was not needed! We were robbing Him of His office and glory! Alas, Christ would say of us with regard to all these things, "They know not what they do." I want you to look quietly at the time past wherein you served sin and see whether there was not a darkness upon your mind, a blindness in your spirit, so that you did not know what you did.

II. Well now, secondly, WE CONFESS THAT THIS IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE. Our Lord might urge it as a plea, but we never could. We did not know what we did and so we were not guilty to the fullest possible extent—but we were guilty enough—therefore let us acknowledge it.

For first, remember, the law never allows this as a plea. In our own English law, a man is supposed to know what the law is. If he breaks it, it is no excuse to plead that he did not know it. It may be regarded by a judge as some extenuation, but the law allows nothing of the kind. God gives us the Law and we are bound to keep it. If I erred through not knowing the Law, still it was a sin. Under the Mosaic Law there were sins of ignorance and for these there were special offerings. The ignorance did not blot out the sin. That is clear in my text, for, if ignorance rendered an action no longer sinful, they why would Christ say, "Father, forgive them"? But He does—He asks for mercy for what is sin—even though the ignorance, in some measure, is supposed to mitigate the criminality of it.

But, dear Friends, we might have known. If we did not know, it was because we would not know. There was the preaching of the Word, but we did not care to hear it. There was this blessed Book, but we did not care to read it. If you and I had sat down and looked at our conduct by the light of the Holy Scripture, we might have known much more of the evil of sin, much more of the love of Christ, much more of the ingratitude which is possible in refusing Christ and not coming to Him.

In addition to that, we did not think. "Oh, but," you say, "young people never think!" But young people should think. If there is anybody who need not think, it is the old man whose day is nearly over. If he thinks, he has but a very short time in which to improve—but the young have all their lives before them. If I were a carpenter and had to make a box, I would not think about it after I had made the box. I would think, before I began to cut my timber, what sort of box it was to be. In every action, a man thinks before he begins or else he is a fool. A young man ought to think more than anybody else, for now he is, as it were, making his box. He is beginning his life-plan—he should be the most thoughtful of all men. Many of us, who are now Christ's people, would have known much more about our Lord if we had given Him more careful consideration in our earlier days. A man will consider about taking a wife. He will consider about making a business. He will consider about buying a horse or a cow, but he will not consider about the claims of Christ and the claims of the Most High God! And this renders his ignorance willful and inexcusable.

Beside that, dear Friends, although we have confessed to ignorance, in many sins we did not know a great deal. Come, let me quicken your memories. There were times when you knew that such an action was wrong when you began it. You looked at the gain it would bring you—and you sold your soul for that price and deliberately did what you were well aware was wrong. Are there not some here, saved by Christ, who must confess that, at times, they did violence to their conscience? They did despite to the Spirit of God, quenched the Light of Heaven, drove the Spirit away from them, distinctly knowing what they were doing! Let us bow before God in the silence of our hearts and acknowledge to all of this. We hear the Master say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us add our own tears as we say, "And forgive us, also, because in some things we did know. In all things we might have known, but we were ignorant for lack of thought, which thought was a solemn duty which we ought to have rendered to God."

One more thing I will say on this head. When a man is ignorant and does not know what he ought to do, what should he do? Well, he should do nothing till he does know! But here is the mischief of it—when we did not know, yet we chose to do the wrong thing. If we did not know, why did we not choose the right thing? But, being in the dark, we never turned to the right, but always blundered to the left from sin to sin! Does not this show us how depraved our hearts are? Though we are seeking to be right, when we are left alone, we go wrong of ourselves. Leave a child alone. Leave a man alone. Leave a tribe alone without teaching and instruction— what comes of it? Why, the same as when you leave a field alone! It never, by any chance, produces wheat or barley! Leave it alone and there are rank weeds, thorns and briars—showing that the natural set of the soil is towards producing that which is worthless!

O Friends, confess the innate evil of your hearts as well as the evil of your lives, in that, when you did not know, yet, having a perverse instinct, you chose the evil and refused the good and, when you did not know enough of Christ and did not think enough of Him to know whether you ought to have Him or not, you would not have come to Him that you might have life! You needed light but you shut your eyes to the sun. You were thirsty but you would not drink of the living spring and so, your ignorance, though it was there, was a criminal ignorance which you must confess before the Lord. Oh, come to the Cross, you who have been there, before, and have lost your burden there! Come and confess your guilt, again, and clasp that Cross afresh! Come and look to Him who bled upon it and praise His dear name that He once prayed for you, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Now, I am going a step further. We were, in a measure, ignorant, but we confess that that measurable ignorance was no excuse.

III. Now, thirdly, WE BLESS OUR LORD FOR PLEADING FOR US. Do you notice when it was that Jesus pleaded? It was while they were

crucifying Him. They had not just driven in the nails, they had lifted up the Cross and dished it down into its socket—and dislocated all His bones so that He could say, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint." Ah, dear Friends, it was then that, instead of a cry or groan, this dear Son of God said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." They did not ask for forgiveness for themselves—Jesus asks forgiveness for them! Their hands were stained with His blood and it was then, even then, that He prayed for them! Let us think of the great love with which He loved us, even while we were yet sinners, when we were rioting in sin, when we drank it down as the ox drinks down water! Even then He prayed for us! "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Bless His name tonight! He prayed for you when you did not pray for yourself! He prayed for you when you were crucifying Him!

Then think of His plea, He pleads His Sonship. He says, "Father, forgive them." He was the Son of God and He put His Divine Sonship into the scale on our behalf. He seems to say, "Father, as I am Your Son, grant Me this request and pardon these rebels. Father, forgive them." The filial rights of Christ were very great. He was the Son of the Highest. "Light of Light, very God of very God," the second Person in the Divine Trinity—and He puts that Sonship here before God and says, "Father, Father, forgive them." Oh, the power of that Word from the Son's lips when He is wounded, when He is in agony, when He is dying! He says, "Father, Father, grant My one request! O Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And the great Father bows His awful head in token that the petition is granted.

Then notice that Jesus here, silently, but really pleads His sufferings. The attitude of Christ when He prayed this prayer is very noteworthy. His hands were stretched upon the transverse beam. His feet were fastened to the upright tree and there He pleaded! Silently His hands and feet were pleading and His agonized body from the very sinew and muscle pleaded with God! His Sacrifice was presented complete and so it is His Cross that takes up the plea, "Father, forgive them." O blessed Christ! It is thus that we have been forgiven, for His Sonship and His Cross have pleaded with God and have prevailed on our behalf.

I love this prayer, also, because of the indistinctness of it. It is, "Father, forgive them." He does not say, "Father, forgive the soldiers who have nailed Me here." He includes them. Neither does He say, "Father, forgive sinners in ages to come who will sin against Me." But He means them. Jesus does not mention them by any accusing name—"Father, forgive My enemies. Father, forgive My murderers." No, there is no word of accusation upon those dear lips. "Father, forgive them." Now into that pronoun, "them," I feel that I can crawl. Can you get in there? Oh, by a humble faith, appropriate the Cross of Christ by trusting in it and get into that big little word, "them"! It seems like a chariot of mercy that has come down to earth into which a man may step—and it shall bear him up to Heaven. "Father, forgive them."

Notice, also, what it was that Jesus asked for—to omit that would be to leave out the very essence of His prayer. He asked for full absolution for His enemies—"Father, forgive them. Do not punish

them. Forgive them. Do not remember their sin. Forgive it, blot it out, throw it into the depths of the sea. Remember it not, My Father. Mention it not against them any more forever. Father, forgive them." Oh, blessed prayer, for the forgiveness of God is broad and deep! When man forgives, he leaves the remembrance of the wrong behind. But when God pardons, He says, "I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." It is this that Christ asked for you and me long before we had any repentance, or any faith—and in answer to that prayer we were brought to feel our sin! We were brought to confess it and to believe in Him! And now, glory be to His name, we can bless Him for having pleaded for us and obtained the forgiveness of all our sins!

IV. I come now to my last remark, which is this—WE NOW REJOICE IN THE PARDON WE HAVE OBTAINED.

Have you obtained pardon? Is this your song?—

"Now, oh joy! My sins are pardoned, Now I can, and do believe."

I have a letter, in my pocket, from a man of education and standing, who has been an agnostic. He says that he was a sarcastic agnostic and he writes praising God and invoking every blessing upon my head for bringing him to the Savior's feet. He says, "I was without happiness for this life and without hope for the next." I believe that that is a truthful description of many an unbeliever. What hope is there for the world to come apart from the Cross of Christ? The best hope such a man has is that he may die the death of a dog and that may be the end of him. What is the hope of the Roman Catholic when he comes to die? I feel so sorry for many devout and earnest friends, for I do not know what their hope is. They do not hope to go to Heaven—not for some time, at any rate—they believe some "purgatorial" pains must be first endured. Ah, this is a poor, poor faith to die on—to have such a hope as that to trouble your last thoughts! I do not know of any religion but that of Christ Jesus which tells us of sin pardoned, absolutely pardoned!

Now, listen. Our teaching is not that, when you come to die, you may, perhaps, find out that it is all right, but, "Beloved, now we are the sons of God." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." He has it now and he knows it, and he rejoices in it! So I come back to the last head of my discourse—we rejoice in the pardon Christ has obtained for us. We are pardoned! I hope that the larger portion of this audience can say, "By the Grace of God, we know that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb."

Pardon has come to us through Christ's plea. Our hope lies in the plea of Christ and especially in His death. If Jesus paid my debt—and He did it if I am a believer in Him—then I am out of debt. If Jesus bore the penalty of my sin—and He did it if I am a Believer—then there is no penalty for me to pay, for we can say to Him—

"Complete Atonement You have made, And to the utmost farthing paid Whatever Your people owed. Nor can His wrath on me take place, If sheltered in Your Righteousness, And sprinkled with Your blood. If You have my discharge procured, And freely in my place endured The whole of wrath Divine— Payment God can't twice demand, First of my bleeding Surety's hand, And then, again, at mine."

If Christ has borne my punishment, I shall never bear it! Oh, what joy there is in this blessed assurance! Your hope that you are pardoned lies in this—that Jesus died. Those dear wounds of

His bled for you!

We praise Him for our pardon because we do know, now, what we did. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I know not how much we ought to love Christ because we sinned against Him so grievously! Now we know that sin is, "exceedingly sinful." Now we know that sin crucified Christ. Now we know that we stabbed our heavenly Lover to His heart! We slew, with ignominious death, our best and dearest Friend and Benefactor! We know that, now, and we could almost weep tears of blood to think that we ever treated Him as we did! But, it is all forgiven, all gone! Oh, let us bless that dear Son of God who has put away even such sins as ours! We feel them more, now, than ever before. We know they are forgiven and our grief is because of the pain that the purchase of our forgiveness cost our Savior. We never knew what our sins really were till we saw Him in a bloody sweat. We never knew the crimson hue of our sins till we read our pardon written in crimson lines with His precious blood! Now we see our sin and yet we do not see it, for God has pardoned it, blotted it out, cast it behind His back forever!

From now on ignorance, such as we have described, shall be hateful to us. Ignorance of Christ and eternal things shall be hateful to us. If, through ignorance, we have sinned, we will have done with that ignorance! We will be students of His Word. We will study that masterpiece of all the sciences, the knowledge of Christ Crucified. We will ask the Holy Spirit to drive far from us the ignorance that genders sin. God grant that we may not fall into sins of ignorance any more, but we may be able to say, "I know whom I have believed and, henceforth I will seek more knowledge till I comprehend, with all saints, what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ, and know the love of God, which passes knowledge!"

I put in a practical word here. If you rejoice that you are pardoned, show your gratitude by your imitation of Christ. There was never before such a plea as this, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Plead like that for others. Has anybody been injuring you? Are there persons who slander you? Pray, tonight, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us always render good for evil, blessing for cursing—and when we are called to suffer through the wrong-doing of others—let us believe that they would not act as they do if it were not because of their ignorance. Let us pray for them and make their very ignorance the plea for their forgiveness—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

I want you to think of the millions in London just now. Think of those miles of streets, pouring out their children this evening! Think of those public houses with the crowds streaming in and out. Go down our streets by moonlight. See what I almost blush to tell. Follow men and women, too, to their homes, and be this your prayer—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." That silver bell—keep it always ringing. What did I say? "That silver bell"? No, it is the golden bell upon the priest's garments. Wear it on your garments, you priests of God, and let it always ring out its golden note, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." If I can set all God's saints imitating Christ with such a prayer as this, I shall not have spoken in vain.

Brothers and Sisters, I see reason for hope in the very ignorance that surrounds us. I see hope for this poor city of ours, hope for this poor country, hope for Africa, China and India. "They know not what they do." Here is a strong argument in their favor, for they are more ignorant than we were. They know less of the evil of sin and less of the hope! Send up this fiery shaft of prayer, straight to the heart of God, while Jesus, from His Throne, shall add His prevalent intercession, "Father,

forgive them; for they know not what they do."

If there are any unconverted people here, and I know that there are some, we will mention them in our private devotion, as well as in the public assembly. And we will pray for them in words like these, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." May God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

Luke 23:33-46; John 19:25-30.

We have often read the story of our Savior's sufferings, but we cannot read it too often. Let us, therefore, once again repair to "the place which is called Calvary." As we just now sang—

"Come, let us stand beneath the Cross, So may the blood from out His side Fall gently on us, drop by drop. Jesus, our Lord is crucified."

We will read, first, Luke's account of our Lord's crucifixion and death. Luke 23:33. And when they were come to the place which is called Cal

vary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. They gave Jesus the place of dishonor. Reckoning Him to be the worst criminal of the three, they put Him between the other two. They heaped upon Him the utmost scorn which they could give to a malefactor—and in so doing they unconsciously honored Him. Jesus always deserves the chief place wherever He is. In all things He must have the pre-eminence. He is King of sufferers as well as King of saints.

34. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. How startled they must have been to hear such words from One who was about to be put to death for a supposed crime! The men that drove the nails, the men that lifted up the tree must have been started back with amazement when they heard Jesus talk to God as His Father—and pray for them—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Did ever Roman legionary hear such words before? I should say not. They were so distinctly and diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of Rome. There it was, blow for blow—only in the case of Jesus, they gave blows where none had been received. The crushing cruelty of the Romans must have been startled, indeed, at such words as these, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

34, 35. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. The gambling soldiers little dreamed that they were fulfilling the 22nd Psalm, which so fully sets forth our Savior's sufferings and which He probably repeated while He hung on the tree. David wrote, "They parted My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture." "And the people stood beholding," gazing, looking on the cruel spectacle. You and I would not have done that—there is a public sentiment which has trained us to hate the sight of cruelty, especially of deadly cruelty to one of our own race—but these people thought that they did no harm when they "stood beholding." They also were thus fulfilling the Scriptures, for the 17th verse of the 22nd Psalm says, "They look and stare upon Me."

35. And the rulers also with them derided Him. Laughed at Him, made Him the object of course jests.

35, 36. Saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is Christ, the Chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar. In mockery, not giving it to Him, as they did later in mercy, but in mockery, pretending to present Him with weak wine, such as they drank.

37. And saying, If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself. I fancy the scorn that they threw into their taunt—"If You are the King of the Jews"—that was a bit of their own. "Save yourself"—that they borrowed from the rulers. Sometimes a scoffer or a mocker cannot exhibit all the bitterness that is in his heart except by using borrowed terms, as these soldiers did.

38. And a superscription also was written over Him in the letters of Greek, Latin and Hebrew—THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. John tells us that Pilate wrote this title and that the chief priests tried in vain to get him to alter it. It was written in the three current languages of the time, so that the Greek, the Roman and the Jew might, alike, understand who He was who was thus put to death. Pilate did not know as much about Christ as we do, or He might have written, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS AND OF THE GENTILES, TOO.

39. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed at Him, saying, If You are Christ, save Yourself and us. He, too, borrows this speech from the rulers who derided Christ, only putting the words, "and us," as a bit of originality. "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

40-41. But the other answering rebuked him saying, Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss. A fine testimony to Christ—"This Man has done nothing amiss"—nothing unbecoming, nothing out of order, nothing criminal, certainly—but nothing even, "amiss." This testimony was well spoken by this dying thief.

42-46. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up His ghost. He yielded His life. He did not die, as we have to do, because our appointed time has come, but willingly the great Sacrifice parted with His life—"He gave up the ghost." He was a willing Sacrifice for guilty men. Now let us see what John says concerning these hours of agony, these hours of triumph.

John 19:25. Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Last at the Cross, first at the sepulcher. No woman's lips betrayed her Lord; no woman's hands ever smote Him; their eyes wept for Him; they gazed upon Him with pitying awe and love. God bless the Marys! When we see so many of them about the Cross, we feel that we honor the very name of Mary.

26. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the Disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son! Sad, sad spectacle! Now was fulfilled the word of Simeon, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Did the Savior mean, as He gave a glance to John, "Woman, you are losing one Son, but yonder stands another who will be a son to you in My absence"? "Woman, behold your

son!"

27. Then said He to the Disciple, Behold your mother! "Take her as your mother, stand in My place, care for her as I have cared for her." Those who love Christ best shall have the honor of taking care of His Church and of His poor. Never say of any poor relative or friend, the widow or the fatherless, "They are a great burden to me." Oh, no! Say, "They are a great honor to me—my Lord has entrusted them to my care." John thought so— let us think so! Jesus selected the Disciple He loved best to take His mother under his care. He selects those whom He loves best, today, and puts His poor people under their wings. Take them gladly and treat them well.

27. And from that hour that Disciple took her into his own home. You expected him to do it, did you not? He loved his Lord so well.

28. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. There was a prophecy to that effect in the Psalms, and He must fulfill it. Think of our dying Savior prayerfully going through the whole of the Scriptures and carefully fulfilling all that is there written concerning Him—"That the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, I thirst."

29, 30. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, For He did receive it. It was a weak kind of wine, commonly drunk by the soldiers. This is not that mixed potion which He refused, wine mingled with myrrh, which was intended to stupefy the dying in their pains—"When He had tasted thereof, He would not drink"—for He would not be stupefied. He came to suffer to the bitter end the penalty of sin and He would not have His sorrow mitigated. But when this slight refreshment was offered to Him, He received it. Having just expressed His human weakness by saying, "I thirst," He now manifests His all-sufficient strength by crying, with a loud voice as Matthew, Mark and Luke all testify.

30. He said, It is finished. What, "it," was it that was finished? I will not attempt to expound it. It is the biggest, "it," that ever was! Turn it over and you will see that it will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow till it fills the whole earth—"It is finished."

30. And He lowered His head, and gave up the ghost. He did not give up the ghost and then bow His head because He was dead. But He bowed His head as though in the act of worship, or as leaning it down upon His Father's bosom—and then gave up the ghost.

Thus have we had two Gospel pictures of our dying Lord. May we remember them and learn the lessons they are intended to teach.

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Luke 23,34 #3068 - Unknown Depths and Heights

UNKNOWN DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS

NO. 3068

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN THE YEAR 1861.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:34.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon Christ's cries from the Cross (in addition to those

mentioned later) are as follows: #2562, Volume 44—CRIES FROM THE CROSS;

#2803, Volume 48—THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS; #2344, Volume 40—

CHRIST'S DYING WORDS FOR HIS CHURCH; #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT needs a tongue as eloquent as that which uttered these words to

fitly describe the scene before us. Christ, the King of kings, and yet the sorrowful Substitute for sinners, has been stripped naked. The mocking soldiers have unconsciously fulfilled the Scripture which said, "They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots." He has been thrown roughly to the ground. His legs and arms have been stretched out upon the transverse wood. Rough hands have grasped the cruel nails. Stern blows have been dealt with the heavy hammer—He now begins to know the physical sufferings of crucifixion. He looks down to the faces of the men who have been putting him to exquisite torture and to bitter shame and utters not a single word of complaint, much less of accusation or of vengeance. And He breathes a prayer, "Father, forgive them"—My murderers, the rough men who have stripped Me, the cruel men who have nailed My hands and pierced My feet—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Brothers and Sisters, the sayings of Christ upon the Cross have a deeper meaning than that which appears upon the surface. They were texts of which His eternal life should be the sermon—they were no common words. As no Word of Scripture is of private interpretation, no Word of the Savior upon the Cross loses its force and significance in later times. What He said then, He is saying

now. What He said then was but the utterance of a sentence which shall roll through the ages and which shall prevail with God through time and throughout eternity. "Father, forgive them," was the prayer of a dying Man, but it was not a dying prayer. "They know not what they do," was the plea of lips that were about to be closed, but it was no plea which was doomed to silence—it is heard in Heaven today, as much as when Jesus first offered it on Calvary from His Cross! The text seems to me to be of great depth. I shall not attempt to fathom it tonight, but reserve it for some future sermons, only tonight exploring two of its parts, rather flitting like a swallow across its surface, than like the leviathan stirring its depths. [Mr. Spurgeon carried out this intention

with Sermons #897, Volume 15—THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2263, Volume 38—CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There are two things in the text, the unknown depths of sin—"They know not what they do." And the unknown heights of mercy, as manifested in Christ's dying plea—"Father, forgive them." May God grant His blessing while I shall endeavor to set forth both, according as the Spirit of God shall enable me to do so!

I. And first, my Friends, it appears from the text that THERE ARE UNKNOWN DEPTHS IN HUMAN INIQUITY. "They know not what they do."

You will tell me, perhaps, that Christ applied this remark to His murderers who did not know that He was the Son of God, for if they had known Him to be the Messiah, "they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." And it might have been said to them, "You did it ignorantly in unbelief." I grant you that this was the immediate meaning of Christ's words, but I think, to return to what I have already affirmed, this saying is true of the entire human family—whenever any of us sin, we know not what we do. Do not misunderstand me. There is no man in the world who has not enough perception left to teach him the difference between right and wrong. Even upon the natural conscience of man there is engraved so much of the Law of God that his conscience either accuses or excuses him. I can scarcely think that there is any race of bushmen, or that there is a single tribe of aboriginal savages who have altogether lost that "candle of the Lord which searches all the inward parts of the belly." They know enough to leave them without excuse, so that if they perish, they perish through willful sin. Yet I must admit, at the outset, that it is possible for the conscience to become so blind through prevailing customs, so seared through lengthened habit and so preserved through absolute ignorance, that men may sin and yet know not what they do. There may be some in whom the judgment has left its seat—they have become maniacs so far as any moral judgment is concerned. They sin with both their hands and, perhaps, write down that very sin as being righteousness, and their obscenity as being a sacrifice acceptable to God! There are none such, however, here. I think in a land like this, with an open Bible, with a preached Gospel, with the Presence of the Spirit of God, I need not address such an assembly as this as not knowing what they do in that sense. If you sin, my Hearers, you sin against light and knowledge. You sin knowing that you do wrong. You put out your hand to touch the accursed thing knowing that it is accursed. You sin willingly and many shall be your stripes, seeing that you know your Master's will and do it not! But still, of the whole human race it is nevertheless true that when they sin, "they know not what they do." Let me show you, as briefly and forcibly as I can, how this is the fact.

Who among us knows, to the full, the real meaning and nature of sin? I can give some description to you of what sin is, but I question, Brothers and Sisters, whether even the most enlightened of us know the whole of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Sinner, I address myself pointedly to you. Do you know that when you sin, you call God a fool? You say that His Law is not the best thing for you, that He has made a mistake and has asked you to do that which would not conduce to your happiness. You call God a fool—is that nothing? Do you know that when you sin, you call God a liar? He tells you that sin is a bitter and an evil thing. You say, "No, it is sweet. It is pleasant. At any rate, I will taste it." You give the lie to the Eternal God! Is that nothing? Whenever you sin, you call God a tyrant. You do, in fact, avow that He has given Laws which are hard and arbitrary, which He ought not to have given and which you are determined to break because you feel that they are not for your happiness—they do not promote your comfort! And is this nothing? Is this nothing—to call the all-wise God a fool, the truthful God a liar and the good and generous God a tyrant?

But there is more than this in your sin. Every time a man sins, he aims a blow at the crown of God. He refuses to let God be the King but puts his hand, his wicked hand, upon the diadem of Deity and would dash the crown from God's head if he could. No, more! He aims a blow at God's very existence. The language of sin is, "No God!" And every time a sinner sins, he tries to get rid of God—and his aim and drift is to stop the Eternal One and to put the King of kings out of His own universe. Is this nothing? Is this nothing? Does not even this, feeble though the explanation is, make sin to be exceedingly sinful? Verily, when we sin, we know not what we do! I can hardly believe that there is a man or woman in this assembly who would, in cold blood, stand up and say, "I defy God! I will do my best to drive Him from His throne. Yes, and to drive Him from existence!" And yet, Sinner, every time you curse, or lie, or swear, or break God's Law in any way whatever, you do, in fact, do all these things and I think I may say you know not what you do.

Let us now shift the kaleidoscope and get another view of this great and solemn Truth of God. Some of us know what we do if we judge of sin by its loathsomeness in God's sight. There is no man living who knows how much God hates and abhors sin! You may detest the loathsome toad. You may give way to a wicked disposition and hate some enemy till you cannot live till that enemy is slain. But you cannot loathe the toad, you cannot hate your foe so thoroughly as God abhors and hates sin! Wherever sin is, there is God's utmost hate, anger and ire. He cannot endure it! His eyes cannot light upon it without burning it up and His hand is always longing to smite it to the death. Why, look Sirs, God had a choice archangel—a glorious being whose wings were like the beams of the rising sun, whose stature was like a great snow-clad mountain and whose beauty was as a fair field girt with flowers. He sinned and God

Volume 53 3spared neither him nor the angels that followed him in his rebellion, but cast them down to Hell and reserved them "in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Angelhood could not save an angel—angelic stature, a seraphic voice and a cherubic flight could not save Satan and his hosts when the stain of sin had fallen on them! How much, then, must God hate sin?

When God had made the world, He smiled and said, "It is good." The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, for the world was very good and God's own heart was glad at the sight of the new-made world. But when Adam sinned, God did not spare Eden, with all its perfections of beauty! And later, when the iniquity of man was fully ripe, He did not spare the round

world itself, but bade the floods leap up from their cavernous darkness and bade the clouds burst their swaddling bands, and the earth was covered with a flood, for "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."

No, if we still want to see more clearly how God hates sin, let us see how sin came upon His own Son, His only-begotten, His well-beloved Son. It came there, not by any deed of His own, but because He took our iniquities upon Himself and, therefore, was numbered with the transgressors. And did His Father spare Him? Far from it! He smote Him with the rod, He scourged Him with the lash, He pierced Him to the heart with His sword. He gave up His darling to the power of the dog, and "Lama Sabachthani?" was a sorrowful proof that God hates and loathes sin, let it be wherever it may. [See Sermon #2133, Volume 36—"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY

HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] Now, Sirs, would you go and press to your bosom and dandle and pamper and pet that thing which God loathes and hates? I think not. If we ever had, before our eyes, God's hatred of sin and this were revealed to our heart by the Holy Spirit, we would long to be rid of it and, therefore, I say that when we take hold of it and embrace it, we know not what we do.

Again, what man among us knows sin in its awful consequences? Is there a mother here who would go home tonight and ask herself the quickest way to damn her child's soul? Is there a father here who would take counsel with his own wickedness as to the readiest method of sending his son to Hell? I think not. And yet, when the father is a drunk or a swearer, what does he do but do his worst to ruin his child? And when the mother is prayerless, Godless, Christless, does she not do her utmost to murder her child's soul? Verily, we in our relationships, when we go into sin, know not what we do! What master could sit down wantonly to undermine the spiritual health of his workmen? What citizen would wish to become the deadly upas tree dropping poison from all its branches? What man of influence would wish to be the basilisk whose eyes should tempt men to their destruction? Not one! And yet when you commit iniquity—and especially those of you who occupy the responsible position of parents, or masters, or ministers, or employers in any way—you do your best to destroy the souls of others! So I can truly say, "Surely you know not what you do."

Do you know, Sinner, that every time you sin, your sin affects the whole world? Let me not stagger you. It is only our finite vision which prevents us seeing the effect of even one thought upon the entire universe. The word I am speaking, just now, sets in motion a wave in the air which reaches your ears. It will abide in your memory, to a certain degree, throughout eternity. In limiting the sphere of my voice to your ears, I have set eternity pulsating—you shall think these things over either in the waves of fiery Hell, or in the fields of glorious Heaven. Eternity has been affected by the speech of a man! And so it is with what you do—there is an effect produced on earth, in Heaven, in Hell by whispered blasphemy or by an unseen lust—you cannot sin alone! You are part of a universe—you cannot disentangle yourself from the meshes of the net of society. You are in the ship of the universe and you cannot get out of it. You cannot even be thrown out of it, as Jonah was cast out of the ship into the sea. Your sin is dragging other men down to Hell, or else the Grace that is in you is helping to lift up others towards God and Heaven. Mind that when you sin, for from this day on I think that you will hardly be able to say as, perhaps, you may have done before, that you know not what you do.

But Sinner, let me speak to you solemnly—to you—about something in which no imagination is needed. Do you see that man yonder? What is he doing? I see a pearly gate within which I mark the splendors of unutterable bliss and hear the hymns of the Paradise of God! What is that man doing? He is putting bolts and bars upon that gate to shut himself out. Do you call him a madman? Sinner, that madman is you! Your sins are shutting you out of Heaven. Do you see yonder man? He is carrying wood on his weary shoulders and stooping to the very ground as he bears his burden. For what purpose is he carrying that fuel? It is to make a bed of fire on which he shall lie and swelter in flames forever! Do you call him a madman? Sinner, that madman is yourself! What is Hell but the laying on upon your back of a whip whose knots you have yourself tied? What is it but the drinking of a cup of gall, every drop of which was distilled from your own sin? These are awful things to say, but I feel that when I look at what Hell is, in all its horrors, and what the loss of Heaven is, with all its dreadful darkness, I must say to you when you sin, surely you know not what you do! The man who puts himself to death with the halter, or drives the knife into his heart, or throws himself into his watery grave may have some present griefs which may, to him, though not to us, seem to be an excuse for fleeing from them. But you, when you sin, are a suicide without excuse because you flee from good that stands before you to an evil that has no mixture of benefit or mercy! You leap into the fire yourself—a fire which you have yourself kindled and which your own blasphemous breath has fanned! Oh, may God teach us, when we sin, what we have really done, that we may not do it

Volume 53 5again and that, by His Grace, we may be led to the precious blood of Christ to have the guilt of it washed away!—

"There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Emmanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood Lose all their guilty stains."

Only once more upon this point and then I will leave it. "They know not what they do." Sinner, do you know that when you sin, eternity is involved in every act? Faith binds me to eternal bliss—sin and unbelief fetter me to everlasting woe. I think I hear the voice of a spirit which has been these last ten years in Hades. Listen! Listen! There is a cry, a groan, but now the words are audible—"Fool that I was to come here! Here I am tortured in indescribable agony that is to go on forever—and for what? For a few hours of giddy mirth, for a few silly jokes that I might indulge my pride rather than submit to the Free Grace of God. Why am I here? Because I would serve Satan—and God knows that it was a bitter service and what little sweet it had is all forgotten now." Do you hear this man as he speaks to himself? "Oh, if I could ever escape from this dreadful dungeon, it would be a Heaven to me! If these awful fires could be quenched, if this gnawing worm would but die, then I would be content! If after ten thousand, thousand, thousand years I could hope to make my escape from this pit of woe, it would set all the bells of my heart a-ringing for very joy at the bare possibility that, at last, I might escape! But what is it that I see written before me? Forever! Forever, on my chains! Forever, branded on my limbs of pain! Forever, on yon waves of fire! Forever, in the angry gaze of an incensed Deity! Forever, in those hungry depths which seem to yawn to suck me into deeper woe! Forever, forever, forever, forever!" O drunkard, swearer, whoremonger—when you sin the next time, remember that the deed you do entails everlasting consequences which will run on forever, forever, FOREVER! Surely, when you have sinned in the past, you must have been ignorant of this overwhelming Truth of God—you could not have known what you were doing!

But have I some here who say that they do know what they are doing? They have been so faithfully warned, so affectionately dealt with, so earnestly prayed for that when they sinned, they sinned willfully, knowing what they did. O my dear Hearers, that is true of some of you! I have often felt, when I have come out of the pulpit, that you would be without excuse in the Day of Judgment. God knows that I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God—Divine Sovereignty in all its absoluteness and the sinner's responsibility in all its fullness! I have preached to you the Doctrines of Grace, but I have not, therefore, kept back the demands of God upon you. And I know that should you perish, it will neither be for want of preaching, nor of weeping. Well, Sirs, if you do perish with the Gospel preached in your ears, you perish fearfully indeed!

Room there! Room—make way you priests of Modoch! Stand back, you followers of Ashtaroth, you worshippers of Baal, stand back! Give up your choice seats, the highest places in the synagogue of Hell! Make room, for here comes a man who read his Bible and heard the Word faithfully preached! Give him the choicest place. Now cannibals, pirates and all you poor beings who sinned, but knew not what you did, make room, for here comes a man who sinned with God before his very eyes and blindly rushed upon the spear of the Almighty when the light of Heaven was shining upon his eyeballs! Make room for him, I say! Get up, you who have been guilty of murder and of the shedding of blood in lands where Christ was never preached! Get up and give your place to this man! "What?" they say, "have you become like one of us?" Yes, we say, not only like one of you, but deeper than your depth, more fiery than your flames, more horrible than your horrors shall be the dread, the doom, the destruction of this man of whom it could not be said, "He knew not what he did." God have mercy upon you, my Hearers! May His Sovereign Grace be extended toward you. May the lines of His election embrace you, the blood of Christ's redemption wash you, the voice of His effectual calling awaken you and the power of His Grace preserve you! Or alas, woe unto you, Newington! Woe unto you, Southwark! If the Gospel preached unto you had been preached in Sodom, it had continued unto this day! And if in Tyre and Sidon—they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes!

I have thus tried, in all simplicity, as God's servant, to expound Christ's plea—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

II. Now, very briefly—but oh, may God grant that it may be with the unction of the Holy One—let me speak upon THE UNKNOWN HEIGHTS OF GRACE.

If there were any men in all the world who under the Covenant of Works, or under that mingle-mangle covenant which some preach, which is half Law and half works, and neither Law nor works—if there were any men who should have been excluded from the Election of Grace it was those men who nailed the Savior to the Cross! And yet, mark this, while Christ did not mention by name the best of the Pharisees, He did mention, before God, particularly and personally, those degraded men who with many an addition of cruel mockery, nailed Him to the Cross! "Father, forgive them." He did not say, "Father, forgive Pontius Pilate, for he sinned unwillingly." He did not say, "Father, forgive Judas, for he repented and cast down his ill-gotten gain in the Temple." But He said, "Father, forgive them." There they are—the mark of the nails has not yet gone out of their hands—there is the print of the head of the nails in the center of their palm even now. Look, the blood of Jesus is on their clothes—the very blood which spurted forth from the Redeemer's hands when they drove the nails through them! Yet He prays, "Father, forgive them." There they

are—they are grinning at their ghastly work and saying, "Aha! Aha!" and joining with the ribald crew and thrusting their tongues into their checks, saying, "He saved others, Himself He could not save." And yet there is heard, above the clamor of their iniquity which appeals to God for justice, the cry of the Savior, "Father, forgive them."

Volume 53 7There is no consciousness of need of forgiveness in them. Their hearts are hard as nether millstones. They laugh at the prayer itself. "Forgive?" they say, "we have done many a worse piece of work than this! We need not be forgiven." They are as cold as ice and stern as steel—and hard as the granite rock. And yet Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them." There are no past good works to recommend them—they never did a good thing in their lives—they are soldiers who have slain, every man, perhaps his hundred men! They have learned to split a little infant on the blade of their swords. They know how to rip up, and tear, and cut off a head and gouge out eyes—they are men whose deeds of blood must be written in fire, but whose deeds of goodness have never yet come to light! And yet Jesus cries, "Father, forgive them." They are men who if the Gospel were preached to them, would reject it. If Christ were offered to them, they would refuse Him. If they were moved by some qualms of conscience, they would stifle them. If they were wept over by the minister, they would ridicule his tears. If they were pleaded for by the Church, they would laugh at the pleas and yet the Savior says, "Father, forgive them." Amid such splendors of Grace, where shall I find words to fitly describe them? Language, you are a dull, cold thing in such a case as this! Words, you have not strength enough to carry the mighty meaning of my soul just now! Was there ever Grace like this, except, when Jesus prayed for me and said, "Father, forgive him"? And when He prayed for you, my Brother, and you, my Sister, and said, "Father, forgive them"?

O my Hearers, when Jesus pleads for us, it is not because there is anything in us why He should plead! It is not because we flee to Him that He pleads for us! It is not because we long for mercy and value it that He pleads for us. He prays for us long before we pray to Him! He died for us before we knew anything about our death in sin. And He lived and pleaded before His Father's Throne when we were cursing, blaspheming and defying Him. Ah, Souls, I would that you could get rid, once and for all, of any idea that Jesus Christ needs anything in you to move His heart of compassion towards you! Where He loves, He loves for His own sake, not because of the worthiness of the object of His love. The source of Grace is in the God of Grace, not in the receiver of Grace! The reason for pardon is not in the penitent, but in the Pardoner. The ground of acceptance is not in our faith, but in Christ, the Author and Finisher of that faith—and hence it is that the Gospel is adapted to the worst of sinners—to the scum, the chaff, the off-scouring, the parings, the filth, the vileness, the rottenness, the stench, the offal of the world! Oh, if we had a Gospel that was half Grace and half human goodness, then the good, the upright, the educated, the refined, the moral would have some degree of hope! But the poor outcast would have none. But now, tonight, I preach a Gospel which comes right down to you, just where you are, in the bog, the mire, the slough, next door to Hell, lying at Hell's gate—not like Lazarus when the dogs licked his sores at the rich man's gate, but lying at the gate of Hell while Hell hounds lick your wounds—cast out from God, abhorred, detested, abhorrent to yourself, obnoxious to your own conscience—such a sinner that you wish you had never been born, or that you had been a viper, a snake, a toad rather than have been a man! Yet can God's Grace reach even you and "unto you is the word of this salvation sent." I do believe that over such sinners as you Jesus pleads tonight,

"Father, forgive them."

And now, my dear Hearers, is there something in you which seems to say, "Unite in that prayer"? Does the Spirit of God whisper in your soul, "Tonight is the hour of mercy. Jesus Christ is passing by—He is interceding for the transgressors"? Then I pray you say, "Father, forgive me." What? Shall my Master say, "Father, forgive them," and will not you pray for yourself? The adamant might melt, the steel dissolve—and will not you melt? Spirit of God, bring the fire and melt the heart! And now, poor Soul, say, "Father, forgive me. I did not know the full guilt of my sin, but I knew enough to make me so guilty that I deserve Your wrath. I have no merits, Lord. I have no righteousness. If You slay me, You are just. If You curse me, I deserve it. But Father, forgive me!" Do not use Christ's plea—that is His, not yours. He could say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." You must use another plea. "Father, forgive me through Your Son's precious blood."

Oh, I think my soul would be ready to leap from earth to Heaven if I could but be sure that there was someone here who was saying in his heart, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and am no more worthy to be called Your son." Or if some heart were saying, "By His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, by His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, Father, forgive me!" Soul, your prayer is heard—"go, and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you."

Go home and tell your friends and your kinsfolk what God has done for your soul and, by-and-by, come here and tell us what God has done for you—and then come to this Communion Table and spiritually eat with us of His flesh and drink of His blood, "for His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed."

May the Lord add His blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Psalms 136:1-26.

[Sermon #787, Volume 13—A SONG, A SOLACE, A SERMON AND A SUMMONS—

is a sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the whole of this Psalm,

although he used as a text, the refrain, "for His Mercy endures forever."—Read/download the entire

sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

This is, indeed, one of the chief songs of praise which we find in the Scriptures. And it is not surprising that such a poet as John Milton should have written that version of it that we often sing—

"Let us with a gladsome mind, Praise the Lord, for He is kind: For His mercies shall endure,

Volume 53 9Ever faithful, ever sure."

Verses 1-3. O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endures forever. Here, you see, we have three titles of God, first as Jehovah, secondly

as the Elohim, thirdly as the Adonai or Lord. By whatever name God is known, He is worthy of our highest praise. Whether it is the name referring to His Self-Existence, or the name relating to His Covenant engagements, or the name applying specially to His rule and governorship—in any and every capacity, let us praise Him. Notice that each of these three verses begins, "O give thanks." We are to praise the Lord for His greatness and to give Him thanks for His goodness. Our praise shall consist largely of the element of gratitude as we think of all that He has done for us. Although I lay no stress upon the fact of these verses being three and upon the names of God being three, yet it is very remarkable that throughout the Old Testament, even when there is no distinct allusion to the Doctrine of the Trinity, yet still the threefold praise is constantly being repeated, as if this sublime Truth of God lay latent, but yet was not unknown to those godly ones who dived deep into the mystery of the Triune Unity of God. Let us who have this Truth so clearly revealed to us, give thanks unto the Triune Jehovah with all the powers of our threefold nature—body, soul and spirit.

4, 5. To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endures forever. [See Sermon #1981, Volume 33—GOD THE WONDER-WORKER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] The making of the heavens is a great marvel of wisdom and, inasmuch as that wondrous work sprang from the unaided wisdom of God, it is a subject for which we should unceasingly praise Him. When men invent some notable piece of machinery, they are generally long in bringing it to perfection and they usually borrow various ideas from those who have preceded them. But it was not so with God. By His own perfect Wisdom, He struck out the arch of Heaven and made all that it covers.

6. To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for His mercy endures forever. Once in the history of the globe, the earth and the waters were mingled together but, at God's bidding, the earth rose to its assigned position and the deeps received the sea and they have kept their places ever since, except when God caused the Flood to cover the whole earth.

7-9. To Him that made great lights: for His mercy endures forever: the sun to rule by day, for His mercy endures forever. The moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endures forever. What should we have been without light? Could any poor unhappy creatures ever have lived in a dark world? Let us praise God for the light! Let us bless Him for the sun—that great mercy, but let us not forget the lesser mercies—the moon and the stars which He also made. It is well, when we are praising God, to dwell upon all His bounties for, sometimes, mercies which appear small from one point of view become all the greater from another point of view. Stars seem little to us, but what vast orbs they really are! Let us praise the great Creator for every kind of light that He has made, and let us especially praise Him for all spiritual light, and even for His ministers who are stars in His right hand. They are but little twinkling lights compared with the great Sun of Righteousness, but still, "He made the stars also." Therefore let Him have due praise for it, "for His mercy endures forever." So far, we have been reminded of the wonders worked by the great Creator. Now we are called upon to give thanks to the Lord for His deliverance of His ancient people out of Egypt.

10-14. To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm for His mercy endures forever: to Him which divided the Red sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever. It

was a great miracle by which the Red Sea was divided. I suppose it was somewhere about eight or nine miles in breadth at the place where the Israelites crossed it, yet the sea rolled back and stood in a heap on either side and left a clear passage for the people through the very heart of the sea! God's mercy made a way for His people through the sea, and a path for them through the mighty waters. But it was no less a mercy to make them go through the sea. They had not been accustomed to any kind of travelling and certainly not to such travelling as that—through the heart of the sea—but the Lord inspired them with confidence, so that they went down into the very depths without fear and came up again on the other side! But God's mercy is always consistent with His justice, so there was very different treatment for the Egyptians.

15, 16. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which led His people through the wilderness: for His mercy endures forever. In this Psalm you have three leadings. There is, in verse 11, leading out—"Brought out Israel." In verse 16 there is leading through—"Led His people through the wilderness." And in the 21st verse we shall find that there is leading into—"And gave their land for an heritage." So God leads us out from the region of sin, He leads us through the wilderness of this life's trial and He leads us into the rest which remains for His people. "To Him which led His people through the wilderness: for His mercy endures forever." You are today, dear Friends, experiencing that kind of leading. Long ago some of you were led out of the realm of sin—now you are passing through this great and terrible wilderness wherein there would be thirst and hunger were it not for the heavenly water and manna. And we might fear the fiery serpents were it not for Him who was lifted up upon the Cross as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Yet the Lord will safely lead you through the wilderness and give you the land of promise.

Volume 53 11 17. To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever. His mercy and His vengeance are quite compatible—the one has not done away with the other.

18-20. And slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan for His mercy endures forever. Here are four verses where we think that one might have sufficed. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we often use only one verse when we ought to use four! Scripture sets us a better example—it frequently repeats its references to some one thing because in that one thing there are included many mercies. It would be well if the diligence in describing details which we use with regard to our troubles could be exercised upon descriptions of our mercies, for then we would imitate the Psalmist's style and say, "O give thanks to Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan." [See Sermon #1285, Volume 22—

SIHON AND OG, OR MERCIES IN DETAIL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

21, 22. And gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even an heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever. Here we have the same thought put into two verses, to show us how to dwell with lengthened notes and repeated Hallelujahs upon the goodness and mercy of God. Notice how many of these verses begin with, "And," as if every mercy had been linked to another which went before it and would be linked to another which would come after it. I like to see these Ands. They remind us that there is more to follow. After all that we

have received from God, there is yet more to come! God has not come to the end of His mercies.

23, 24. Who remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever: and has redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endures forever. Redemption—what a grand note that is! What voice can ever reach its fullness and its loftiness! Let us praise the name of the Lord as we remember the price and the power with which He "has redeemed us from our enemies."

25. Who gives food to all flesh. There is food for you, then, poor hungry one! There is food for you, child of God. He "who gives food to all flesh," can certainly give food to all spirits.

25, 26. For His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of Heaven: for His mercy endures forever.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 23,34 #3558 - A Plea from the Cross

A PLEA FROM THE CROSS

NO. 3558

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 1917.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THE LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY29, 1871.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:34.

To the godly heart there is a brighter light on Calvary than anywhere else beneath the sun. He who often resorts to Golgotha, if his spirit is right, must be wise. It is the University of Saints! He who would know sin—its heinousness, its penalty—must see the Son of God making Expiation for it by His death on the accursed tree. He who would know love—the love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown—must read it in the Savior's face—or, if you will, written in crimson lines in the Savior's heart, pierced with the spear. He who would know how he may get his sin forgiven, must resort to the Cross. There, and there only, is seen the way by which sin can be pardoned and the sinner accepted with God! And he who, finding pardon there, would seek to be useful to his fellow men and bring them into the same condition, must, himself, keep near that Cross, that he may speak much of it and, in the power of it, may be able to persuade and to prevail with the sons of men. Abide at the Cross, Beloved—there is no air so healthy and quickening as that which is breathed there! There was the birthplace of your hope! There its native air! There must be on earth, the climax of your joy! Live upon a Crucified Savior as you live by a Crucified Savior!

And now this word which we hear at Calvary, the first word of our Savior after He had been fastened to the Cross—this word I shall not attempt to fathom, or go into the depths of it, but shall rather touch the surface of it, skimming it, and uttering a few such sentences, as it were, one after the other that have arisen to my mind while listening to the voice of our Lord in this, His plaintive cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I will suppose that I have many here, and I fear I need not make it a supposition, who as yet are unpardoned, unreconciled to God. Will you come with me and make a pilgrimage to Calvary? Will you look at your Savior? He has just come up the hill of doom! They have thrown Him upon His back. There is the Cross—the executioners have stretched out His hands and His feet—they have taken the nails— they have driven them through His hands and feet! He is fastened to the wood, and now as they are lifting Him up, before it jars into the ground, you hear Him cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not

what they do." I want you to learn a few lessons out of this. And the first shall be, see here—

I. THE SAVIOR'S LOVE TO SINNERS. It is His last hour, but He thinks of them! He had searched for them in

His health and strength. He went about doing good. He came to seek and to save the rebellious and He had spent His active life in their service. He is about to die, but the ruling passion is strong in death. He is still seeking sinners and if He can preach no more, yet He can pray! And if He will not speak to them, yet He can speak to God for them, and so He continues to show which way His heart runs, by the prayer for those that nailed Him to the wood, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He had been 30 years in their midst and His holy soul had been much vexed by them. He had endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, but you see He has not cast them off—He has not turned His love to wrath. He is not weary of them, but He still pleads, "Father, oh, forgive them." What love is this! One would suppose that the pain which He then felt might have distracted His mind from others, and His prayer might have been for Himself, that patience might be given, that strength might be sustained! But no, oblivious of Himself, His only care is still for those He seeks—the sinful sons of men! Just as an arrow from a bow shot forth with such force that it speeds onward to its target, His whole strength and soul speeds onward to the mark of the salvation of the sons of men! One thing, one thing only, does He do—He seeks their good! And I say again, if not now by active ministering to them, yet by ministering for them, He prays "Father, forgive them." It is one thing to love persons at a distance and to have philanthropic desires for their good—it is quite another thing to live with them and still have the same fondness towards them. And it is quite another thing by far to receive bad treatment from them—contumely, scorn and a worse thing even than that, to be about to receive your death from them—and still to pray for them! But such is the perseverance of Jesus' love that it cannot be turned aside. They have spit into His face, but still He prays for them. They have scourged Him with their cruel lashes. They have hounded Him along the streets. They have, at last, pierced His hands and feet, and stripped Him! And they now hang Him up upon the Cross between Heaven and earth—but still nothing can diminish the flame of His love, nor turn aside His heart's desire from them—it is still for them He lives, for them He dies. "Father, oh, forgive them," is the sign and proof that He is still holding to the one great work He undertook! Now I would, O Sinner, I would that you would learn this lesson. Herein is love, behold what love! Will you not come and share in it? What keeps you back? Can you hold your heart from Immanuel? Can you refuse to love such a dear lover of the sons of men? I think if our hearts were not adamant or worse, they would melt at the sight of the pleading love of Jesus upon the Cross. Come, Soul, have done with your hardness—let a drop of Christ's blood melt that heart of yours! Have done with your carelessness—let a spark of love set your heart on fire towards Him! Are you afraid to come, afraid of Him who died for sinners, afraid of love, terrified at mercy? Oh, be not so, but come and welcome! Put your trust in Him who, with His dying breath, proves the strength of His Almighty love by pleading for His foes! Let that stand for the first remark. Here is the strong love of Christ. Here, next, we see—

II. HOW LOVE SHOWS ITSELF. How did Jesus prove His love in this last great moment? It was by

prayer! Love shows itself in prayer. Prayer, alone, would not be a sufficient proof of love, but He who dies and prays, whose life is a prayer, and whose death is a prayer, proves His love by adding to His life and death the vocal utterance of both in this cry, "Father, forgive them." If Jesus Christ would prove His love to you, He does it by praying for you. Observe, then, the extreme value of prayer. It is a ripe fruit of the Cross. It is, if I may call it so, a golden apple of the Cross—intercessory prayer! See, then, Sinner, the need there is for you to pray. If Jesus prays and proves His love by prayer, and if the saints on earth who love you pray for you, depend upon it, prayer is no light thing. Bend those knees of yours, lift your eyes to Heaven and let a prayer go up from the depths of your spirit, "Father, forgive me! Your Son has prayed, so pray I. He says, 'Father, forgive them,' and I pray, 'Father, forgive me.'" Ought not this to bring every sinner to his knees? Would it not, if men were in their senses? Would not the sight of a dying Christ pleading for the guilty make the guilty plead? Oh, who can restrain prayer for himself when Jesus leads the way? When He says, "Forgive them," will you not say, "Amen"? Oh, deserve you not right well to perish if you cannot join your assent to the Divine Intercession of the pleading Savior! Sinner, I beseech you now, in the secret of your soul, to pray, "Father, forgive me." "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Is there no woman, is there no man, that could pray that now? You need not speak—let but your lips move. But, oh, since Jesus Christ tonight is set forth before you in the delightful attitude of an Intercessor praying for the guilty, I implore you pray for yourselves—and may God send you, this night, an answer of peace—may your pardon be signed and sealed to the comfort of your spirit!

And now leaving that observation, we pass to the next. We saw the love of Jesus. We saw how that love shows itself in prayer. See next—

III. WHAT IT IS THE SAVIOR ASKS. He asks forgiveness, "Father, forgive them." If the Savior should pray

for all of us here present, He need not amend that prayer. It was suitable to those who nailed Him to the tree. They needed pardon for the murder of their Savior. It was suitable to the clamoring multitude, who had said, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." They needed forgiveness for that blood which they then brought upon themselves, but it is equally suitable to each one here present, "Forgive them." May I ask you to look back upon your past lives? Have you been kept from grosser sins? Thank God for it, but your sins of heart, of mind, of tongue, your sins of omission. What? Are these nothing? God grant you may feel them to be something and may you feel, tonight, that what you need is even as if you had been an open offend

Volume 63 3er—you need forgiveness and if, perchance, there are some here who have gone into open sin with a high hand and an outstretched arm, yet, my Brother, yet my Sister, this prayer needs no enlargement to suit you, "Father, forgive them." "Father, forgive them," forgiveness covers all! A man receipts a bill. He puts his name at the bottom. If that bill were for ten thousand pounds or ten pence, it is the same, the receipt has covered all—and Jesus' hand, when He puts it with the bloody red nail prints upon the great record of our sins, draws a red line down the page and blots out the whole—and leaves not a single sin on the page! "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Oh, the greatness of that word, "forgiven"! Blessed be the Lord Jesus for praying such a prayer as that! Do you know, I do not think it need be altered for the best man and the best woman here, for

even our best things need forgiveness. When you have prayed the best prayer you ever prayed, you might well ask God to forgive it! If you have preached the best sermon you ever preached, you may ask to be forgiven it, for some sin has mingled with your holiest action, so forgiveness is needed at best, and always needed at the worst—needed today, tomorrow and all through life, and needed when the breath leaves the body—always needed that blessed prayer that sweeps the compass of mortal existence—that comprehends so much, "Father, forgive them." This is the great thing love asks, for the forgiveness of those for whom she pleads. But passing on you will observe—

IV. FOR WHOM IT IS THAT OUR SAVIOR, IN THIS CASE, OFFERED THE PETITION. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Now that little word, "them," is a great word because it is so little. "Father, forgive them." The Savior is explicit—He does not mention the names of the four soldiers who pierced His hands and feet. No. He meant them, but He meant more. He does not mention the names of these in the crowd who were gazing upon Him with insolent stare—He meant them. He does not mention those that had cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"—He had meant them. He does not say, "Father, forgive them, for they knew not what they did"—for that would look as if He only prayed for sins that had already been committed. He does not say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they shall do," for that would look as if He only prayed for sins that would be committed! But He says, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And putting it thus in the present, it seems as though the petition had one hand to reach out to the past sins of mankind before He died, and another hand to the sins to come of mankind after He had offered the Sacrifice. "They know not what they do." It is put so indefinitely, the, "them," and the, "do," the tense of the verb and the pronoun—they are so indefinite that I bless God for the wide extent of their range! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Who, then, is included in that word, "them"? I venture to say every man that is willing to be included—every man that feels he is included! Did you slay Christ? Have your sins caused Him to die? Do you know, tonight, that your sins fastened Him to the cruel tree? Could you join in the hymn we sung just now? Then, when Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," He included you in that prayer, and me in that prayer, and tens of thousands besides in that word, "them."

Yet, yet you will observe in that word He put it specially. He does not exclude any, but He does include some more peculiarly than others, for His prayer is for those who knew not what they did. Can I get in there? I think I can. I believe that most here present can. I do not think all the sons of men can—Judas, for instance, I fear he did know what he did, and deliberately sold his Lord and Master. I am half afraid that Pilate, to a great extent, knew what he did, and there are some of whom it is written, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that you shall pray for it." A great Doctrine, but it is in the Word—a terrible Doctrine, but there it stands! You know how Peter put it in that first sermon. He said, "I know, my brethren, that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers"—as if he felt that had they known what they did, their sin had been unpardonable. And the Apostle Paul, himself, speaking of his own persecution, said, "Because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." There is a deliberate Crucifixion of Christ as Christ, knowing what you are doing—doing it out of sheer malice to the Christ of God, out of intense hatred to Him, to Him personally—which is unpardonable, for this reason, that the man who commits it never repents. Could he repent, the pardon were sure, but the capacity to do that argues incapacity to ever be made penitent. The man is given over, hardened—he perishes in his sin!

But the Lord Jesus in this prayer felt that those around Him did not know what they were doing—the most of them did not know He was God's Son. They would not have crucified Him had they known—they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. They did know—most of them knew—that He was a righteous Man and they must have felt they were doing very wrong in putting Him to death, but they did not recognize Him as the Messiah and as the Son of God—otherwise the most of them would have held back their hand. Now, though I have sinned against light and knowledge, and you have done the same, my Brothers and Sisters, yet in our past sin we did not deliberately intend to put Christ to death. We did not, like Satan of malice propense, desire to overthrow the Kingdom of God and Christ. Blessed be God, He saved us from that! We went far, very far, horribly far, but restraining Grace kept us back from that, and the Savior puts it there—makes such the object of His prayer. I do not say He excludes those who did it knowingly, but He does include peculiarly those who did not know what they did—whose sin, to a great extent, as to its far-reaching heinousness was wrapped in ignorance. He says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Then the prayer of love is offered for a vast company of sinners in darkness and ignorance, who have sinned, but who have not been allowed utterly, knowingly, willfully, viciously to crucify the Son of God and put Him to an open shame!

Volume 63 5Now I want you to notice what this prayer of love admits. There is something in it that ought never to be forgotten. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." You see, then, this prayer, even of a patient, loving, gentle Savior, who wishes to plead all He can on the behalf of those for whom He prays—this prayer admits that they need to be forgiven who have sinned ignorantly. Some people have thought, "If I did not know it to be sin to the full extent, then it was not sin." Ah, not so! It was sin, for Christ asks to have it forgiven! If I, doing what I did not fully understand, yet did wrong, I am not excused the wrong because I did not know to the fullest extent how wrong it was. I am just as guilty as if I did know, from some points of view, though not from others, but from any point of view, I still need to be forgiven. Ignorance of the law does not prevent the guilt of him who breaks it. As you know, my Brothers and Sisters, human law, the law of the land, for instance—never takes ignorance of the law as a complete excuse for the breach of the law! The laws of England always assume that every man knows the law. The law is made—it is a public law and he who breaks it cannot go before the Magistrate and say—"I did not know it was the law; you must discharge me." The Magistrate may, as a man, say, "Well, if you did not know it was law, there is some excuse for you." As a Magistrate, he must not say that, for the law judges the man on its own self as publicly known, and does not allow for the excuse of not knowing the law.

If the Savior, in His infinite mercy, said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," it was a plea—of course, but not a plea of law. Sinai has no room for that excuse, for Sinai says, "If you don't know, you ought to have known." And in this particular case, especially, if they did not know Christ to be God, they ought to have known it. The prophecies were so clear. The Person of Christ so exactly fitted in to every type and every prophetic declaration, that it was "a willful blindness that had happened unto Israel." They ought to have known it. One sin is never an excuse for another sin. It was a sin for them not to know! That sin, therefore, did not excuse them for committing the other. It is only Sovereign Grace that brought that in as a plea—it is not justice, nor is it law—it the heart of mercy that pleads that.

What I want you to notice, now, then, is though I did not know when I sinned as child and as a young man all that was meant by sin, though I especially did not know that I was crucifying Christ, yet the guilt is just the same as before God, and I need to be forgiven for it, or else it will be laid to my charge and I shall be punished as surely as God's Law stands fast. Do you think the Savior would say, "Father, forgive them," if it were not a wrong? He never prayed a superfluous prayer! The prayer, "Forgive," is a sentence in itself, teaching us that sins of ignorance are sins. Oh, my dear Hearers, there are none of us who know to the full extent the sin of our sin! The most tender heart here does not know the blackness of its sin! I have sometimes talked with persons under conviction who have told me what dreadful sinners they were, and they have looked a little surprised when I have said, "But you are ten times worse than you think you are." No, they scarcely thought that could be possible, yet I would venture to say that to the most tender-hearted penitent that ever lived, you have no idea, my Friend, of the aggravation of your sin, nor is it possible you should have, nor do I know that it is desirable. So long as you know enough of your sin to hate it, and to flee to Christ for the pardon of it, that will suffice. But, oh, the scholarship that would be needed to understand all the depths of sin, it were the scholarship of the Cross over again—you would have need to die like Christ to know what sin means in its infinite, its boundless guilt! Do not ask to know that, but do pray that the Lord would search you and forgive you your sins. You did not know of pardoned sins you have committed, manifold sins that have passed by your notice, that you have not observed and, consequently, could not have confessed in particular. Beseech the Savior, whose cry is, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," to pray for unknown mercy by His unknown agony for your unknown sin! It is a wondrous prayer, this, but we cannot stay much longer on it.

We make yet another remark, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

V. THIS PRAYER WARNS US. I have felt intense pleasure in thinking it over, but at the same time

that pleasure has been mingled with great bitterness. There is such a warning there, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" It does not say, as I have already said, that if they did know, Christ would not pray for them, but it does seem to hint that. In the background I see a something—not that every sin committed against light is unpardonable—God be thanked that is not so, but some sins committed against light and knowledge so harden the heart that the man never repents! He never will, he will go to Hell hardened like steel! And I am afraid some of you are in great likelihood of committing it. Those who have not heard the Gospel cannot very readily commit this, unless their conscience has been desperately violated, but some of you who have been hearers often, and perhaps were once professors—who have knowingly chosen the wrong path and have deliberately sacrificed your character for drink or gain or lust—I will not say that you have passed that boundary, but I do tremble as I hear the booming of that text, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that you shall pray for it," even as I hear the Master's words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But these persons knew what they did, did it deliberately, did it over again and again, and again—perhaps went to the Lord's Table and deliberately went to their uncleanness, stood up in public, it may be, and then deliberately went to their filthiness. Or they listened to the sermon on Sunday and they said, "I'll do better"—and then deliberately went on Monday to their drunken companions again! Oh, Man, you may have stood in the street, perhaps, and said to yourself, "Now, which shall it be? I feel as if I were called to serve God, but yet how can I give up such-and-such a darling lust?" There is a point in men's lives wherein if they

deliberately choose the wrong, knowing it is wrong, with the Light of God shining on their

Volume 63 7eyeballs—yet they deliberately give up Christ, Heaven, pardon and they choose Hell and their own delusions—I fear that with many from that hour the wax is cooled upon their death warrant and it will never be reversed, for this text, though it gently flows from the Savior's lips and drops like dew, has about it the lightning flash and thunderbolt that startles, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

But there are some who know what they do and take the hammer and nail Christ up to the Cross! They take a spear and pierce His side and do it knowing what they are doing! And all the while they are glibly talking of religion, taking the Bible to make jokes out of it, taking the very ministers they once professed to love and scoffing them, taking the Doctrines of the Gospel and making these a cloak for their sins—these men—what will I say of them? God have mercy upon them, but I fear, I fear, that He never will, for they will never seek it, and He will never grant it! Could they seek it, He would give it. While a man can seek, he shall find. While a heart can melt, God will pity. There is never a contrite soul but what God looks with love upon it. But here is the mischief, for these men, who know what they do, repent not, but are seared as with a hot iron—they become wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!

But I must close here. This shall be a closing word. At the same time, you see the text woos. It warns, but it woos. How it woos the ignorant, especially! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, some of you have dropped in here tonight who, perhaps, don't often listen to the Gospel. You have been living a life of sin. You knew it was sin, You knew it was sin, but you did not know that you were nailing Christ to the Cross. You sought your own pleasure, you sought your own gratifications. You have been very guilty. You have lived a careless, Godless, Christless life, but still you did not mean to sin against God so as to crucify Christ. You see you have done so—now you feel you are guilty of it— but before, you had not that Light of God that you now have. Then Jesus says, "Come to Me, come to Me! My prayer goes up to Heaven for you, you ignorant one." Sinful, but without light, Jesus intercedes! Oh, join your prayer with the prayer of Jesus, and say, "Father, forgive Your ignorant child, Your sinful, wayward child. I do not plead, 'I knew not what I did,' but Christ pleads it for me! I plead that Jesus died. Oh, for His sake, have pity! Hear His blood as it drops from His hands and feet; hear it and plead for me, 'Father, forgive them.'"

Oh if you will seek the Lord, you shall have Him! If you will but turn your eyes to Him upon the Cross, you shall live! Whoever among you in this house will but trust Him, shall find Him able and willing to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Oh, come and welcome, come and welcome! And may God grant that you may come tonight—

"But if your ears refuse The language of His Grace, And hearts grow gross like stubborn Jews, That unbelieving race. The Lord in vengeance dressed Will lift His hand and swear 'You that despised My promised rest Shall have no portion there."

God bless you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Matthew 27:32-49.

Verse 32. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross. Perhaps they were afraid that Christ would die from exhaustion, so they compelled Simon to bear His Cross. Any one of Christ's followers might have wished to have been this man of Cyrene, but we need not envy him, for there is a cross for each of us to carry. Oh, that we were as willing to bear Christ's Cross as Christ was to bear our sins on His Cross! If anything happens to us by way of persecution or ridicule for our Lord's sake, and the Gospel's, let us cheerfully endure it! As knights are made by a stroke from the sovereign's sword, so shall we become princes in Christ's realm as He lays His Cross on our shoulders.

33, 34. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink. Golgotha was the common place of execution for malefactors, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem, outside the gate of the city. There was a special symbolical reason for Christ's suffering outside the gate, and His followers are bid to "go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:1113). A stupefying draught was given to the condemned, to take away something of the agony of crucifixion—but our Lord came to suffer—and He would not take anything that would at all impair His faculties. He did not forbid His fellow sufferers drinking the vinegar mingled with gall ("wine mingled with myrrh," Mark 15:23), but He would not drink thereof. Jesus did not refuse this draught because of its bitterness, for He was prepared to drink even to the last dreadful dregs the bitter cup of wrath which was His people's due.

35. And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. There is a world of meaning in that short sentence, "and they crucified Him," driving their bolts of iron through His blessed hands and feet, fastening Him to the Cross and lifting Him up to hang there upon a gallows reserved for felons. We can scarcely realize all that the Crucifixion meant to our dear Lord, but we can join in Faber's prayer—

"Lord Jesus! May we love and weep, Since You, for us, are crucified."

Then was fulfilled all that our Lord had foretold in Chapter 20:17-19, except His Resurrection, the time for which had not arrived.

Volume 63 9The criminals' clothes were the executioners' profits. The Roman soldiers who crucified Christ had no thought of fulfilling the Scriptures when they parted His garments, casting lots, yet their action was exactly that which had been foretold in Psalms 22:18! The seamless robe would have been spoiled if it had been torn, so the soldiers raffled for the vesture, while they shared the other garments of our Lord. The dice would be almost stained with the blood of Christ, yet the gamblers played on beneath the shadow of His Cross. Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. Beware of it in any form! No games of chance should be played by Christians, for the blood of Christ seems to have bespattered them all.

36. And sitting down they watched Him there. Some watched Him from curiosity, some to make sure that He really did die, some even delighted their cruel eyes with His sufferings—and there were some, hard by the Cross, who wept and bewailed, a sword passing through their own hearts while the Son of Man was agonizing even unto death!

37. And set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. What a marvelous Providence it was that moved Pilate's pen! The representative of the Roman Emperor was little likely to concede kingship to any man, yet he deliberately wrote, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," and nothing would induce him to alter what he had written! Even on His Cross, Christ was proclaimed King, in the sacerdotal Hebrew, the classical Greek, and the common Latin, so that everybody in the crowd could read the inscription! When will the Jews admit Jesus as their King? They will do so one day, looking on Him whom they pierced. Perhaps they will think more of Christ when Christians think more of them—when our hardness of heart towards them has gone, possibly their hardness of heart towards Christ may also disappear.

38. Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. As if to show that they regarded Christ as the worst of the three criminals, they put Him between the two thieves, giving Him the place of dishonor. Thus was the prophecy fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors." The two malefactors deserved to die, as one of them admitted (Luke 23:40-41), but a greater load of guilt vested upon Christ, for, "He bore the sin of many," and, therefore, He was rightly distinguished as the King of Sufferers, who could truly ask— "Was ever grief like Mine?"

Verses 39, 40. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, You who destroys the temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Nothing torments a man when in pain more than mockery. When Jesus Christ most needed words of pity and looks of kindness, they who passed by, reviled Him, wagging their heads. Perhaps the most painful part of ridicule is to have one's most solemn sayings turned to scorn, as were our Lord's words about the temple of His body—"You who destroys the temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself." He might have saved Himself—He might have "come down from the Cross"—but if He had done so, we could never have become the sons of God! It was because He was the Son of God that He did not come down from the Cross, but hung there until He had completed the Sacrifice for His people's sin. Christ's Cross is the Jacob's ladder by which we mount up to Heaven! This is the cry of the Socinian today, "Come down from the Cross. Give up the atoning Sacrifice and we will be Christians!" Many are willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ Crucified. They admit that He was a good Man and a great Teacher, but by rejecting His vicarious Atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as these mockers at Golgotha did.

41-43. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross and we will believe Him. He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The chief priests, with the scribes and elders, forgetting their high station and rank, joined the ribald crew in mocking Jesus in His death pangs! Every word was emphatic—every syllable cut and pierced our Lord to the heart. They mocked Him as a Savior—"He saved others; Himself He cannot save." They mocked Him as a King—"If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him." They mocked Him as a Believer—"He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." They mocked Him as the Son of God—"For He said, I am the Son of God." Those who say that Christ was a good Man, virtually admit His Deity, for He claimed to be the Son of God. If He was not what He professed to be, He was an impostor. Notice the testimony that Christ's bitterest enemies bore

even as they reviled Him—"He saved others." "He is the King of Israel" (R. V.) "He trusted in God."

44. The thieves, also, who were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth. The sharers of His misery, the wretches who were crucified with Him, joined in reviling Jesus. Nothing was lacking to fill up His cup of suffering and shame. The conversion of the penitent thief was all the more remarkable because he had but a little while before been among the mockers of his Savior! What a trophy of Divine Grace he became!

45. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. Some have thought that this darkness covered the whole world, and so caused even a heathen to exclaim, "Either the world is about to expire, or the God who made the world is in anguish." This darkness was supernatural—it was not an eclipse. The sun could no longer look upon its Maker surrounded by these who mocked Him. He covered his face and traveled on in tenfold night, in very shame that the great Sun of Righteousness should, Himself, be in such terrible darkness.

46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? In order that the Sacrifice of Christ might be complete, it pleased the Father to forsake His well-beloved Son. Sin was laid on Christ, so God must turn away His face from the Sin-Bearer. To be deserted

Volume 63 11 of His God was the climax of Christ's grief, the quintessence of His sorrow! See here the distinction between the martyrs and their Lord—in their dying agonies they have been Divinely sustained—but Jesus, suffering as the Substitute for sinners, was forsaken of God! The saints who have known what it is to have their Father's face hidden from them, even for a brief space, can scarcely imagine the suffering that wrung from our Savior the agonizing cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

47. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This Man calls for Elijah. They knew better, yet they jested at the Savior's prayer. Wickedly, willfully and scornfully, they turned His death shriek into ridicule!

48, 49. And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. The rest said, Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him. A person in such agony as Jesus was suffering might have mentioned many pangs that He was enduring, but it was necessary for Him to say, "I thirst," in order that another Scripture might be fulfilled. One of them, more compassionate than his companions, ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, from the vessel probably brought by the soldiers for their own use, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life. In His death the whole circle of Creation was completed. As the sponge brought refreshment to the lips of our dying Lord, so may the least of God's living ones help to refresh Him, now that He has ascended from the Cross to the Throne!

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 23,34 #897 - The First Cry from the Cross

THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS

NO. 897

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24, 1869,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:34.

OUR Lord was at that moment enduring the first pains of crucifixion. The executioners had just then driven the nails through His hands and feet. He must have been, moreover, greatly depressed and brought into a condition of extreme weakness by the agony of the night in Gethsemane and by the scourging and cruel mocking which He had endured all through the morning from Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod and the Praetorian guards. Yet neither the weakness of the past, nor the pain of the present could prevent Him from continuing in prayer. The lamb of God was silent to men, but He was not silent to God. Dumb as a sheep before her shearers, He had not a word to say in His own defense to man, but He continues in His heart crying unto His Father and no pain and no weakness can silence His holy supplications.

Beloved, what an example our Lord here presents to us! Let us continue in prayer so long as our heart beats! Let no excess of suffering drive us away from the Throne of Grace, but rather let it drive us closer to it—

"Long as they live should Christians pray, For only while they pray they live."

To cease from prayer is to renounce the consolations which our case requires. Under all distractions of spirit and overwhelming of heart, great God, help us still to pray and never from the Mercy Seat may our footsteps be driven by despair. Our blessed Redeemer persevered in prayer even when the cruel iron tore His tender nerves and blow after blow of the hammer jarred His whole frame with anguish—and this perseverance may be accounted for by the fact that He was so in the habit of prayer that He could not cease from it—He had acquired a mighty velocity of intercession which forbade Him to pause. Those long nights upon the cold mountainside—those many days which had been spent in solitude, those perpetual ejaculations which He would dart up to Heaven—all these had formed in Him a habit so powerful, that the severest torments could not slow its force.

Yet it was more than habit. Our Lord was baptized in the spirit of prayer. He lived in it, it lived in Him. It had come to be an element of His Nature. He was like that precious spice, which, being bruised, does not cease to give forth its perfume, but rather yields it all the more abundantly.

Because of the blows to the pestle, its fragrance is no outward and superficial quality, but an inward virtue essential to its nature—which the pounding does but fetch from it—causing it to reveal its secret soul of sweetness. So Jesus prays, even as a bundle of myrrh gives forth its smell, or as birds sing because they cannot do otherwise. Prayer wrapped His very soul as with a garment and His heart went forth in much array. I repeat it, let this be our example—never, under any circumstances, however severe the trial, or depressing the difficulty—let us cease from prayer.

Observe, further, that our Lord, in the prayer before us, remains in the vigor of faith as to His Sonship. The extreme trial to which He now submitted Himself could not prevent His holding fast His Sonship. His prayer begins, "Father." It was not without meaning that He taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father," for our prevalence in prayer will much depend upon our confidence in our relationship to God. Under great losses and crosses one is apt to think that God is not dealing with us as a father with a child, but rather as a severe judge with a condemned criminal. But the cry of Christ, when He is brought to an extremity which we shall never reach, betrays no faltering in the spirit of Sonship. And in Gethsemane, when the bloody sweat fell fast upon the ground, His most bitter cry commenced with, "My Father," asking that if it were possible the cup of gall might pass from Him. He pleaded with the Lord as His Father, even as He over and over again had called Him on that dark and doleful night.

Here, again, in this, the first of His seven expiring cries, it is "Father." O that the Spirit that makes us cry, "Abba, Father," may never cease His operations! May we never be brought into spiritual bondage by the suggestion, "If you are the Son of God." Or if the Tempter should so assail us, may we triumph as Jesus did in the hungry wilderness. May the Spirit which cries, "Abba, Father," repel each unbelieving fear. When we are chastened, as we must be (for what sort is there whom his father chastens not?) may we be in loving subjection to the Father of our spirits and live. But never may we become captives to the spirit of bondage, so as to doubt the love of our gracious Father, or our share in His adoption.

More remarkable, however, is the fact that our Lord's prayer to His Father was not for Himself. He continued on the Cross to pray for Himself, it is true, and His lamentable cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" shows the personality of His prayer. But the first of the seven great cries on the Cross has scarcely even an indirect reference to Himself. It is, "Father, forgive them." The petition is altogether for others and though there is an allusion to the cruelties which they were exercising upon Him, yet it is remote.

And, you will observe He does not say, "I forgive them"—that is taken for granted—He seems to lose sight of the fact that they were doing any wrong to Him. It is the wrong which they were doing to the Father that is on His mind. The insult which they are paying to the Father, in the Person of the Son—He thinks not of Himself at all. The cry, "Father, forgive them," is altogether unselfish. He, Himself, is in the prayer, as though He were not. So complete is His self-annihilation that He loses sight of Himself and His woes. My Brethren, if there had ever been a time in the life of the Son of Man when He might have rigidly confined His prayer to Himself, without anyone complaining, surely it was when He was beginning His death throes.

We would not marvel, if any man here were fastened to the stake, or fixed to a cross, if his first and even his last and all his prayers were for support under so arduous a trial. But see, the Lord Jesus

began His prayer by pleading for others! Can't you see what a great heart is revealed here? What a soul of compassion was in the Crucified! How Godlike, how Divine! Was there ever such a one before Him, who, even in the very pangs of death, offers as His first prayer an intercession for others? Let this unselfish spirit be in you, also, my Brothers and Sisters. Look not every man upon his own things, but every man, also, on the things of others. Love your neighbors as yourselves and as Christ has set before you this paragon of unselfishness, seek to follow Him, treading in His steps.

There is, however, a crowning jewel in this diadem of glorious love. The Sun of Righteousness sets upon Calvary in a wondrous splendor, but among the bright colors which glorify His departure, there is this one—the prayer was not alone for others, but it was for His cruelest enemies. His enemies, did I say? There is more than that to be considered. It was not a prayer for enemies who had done Him an ill deed years before, but for those who were then and there murdering Him! Not in cold blood did the Savior pray, after He had forgotten the injury and could the more easily forgive it, but while the first red drops of blood were spurting on the hands which drove the nails! While yet the hammer was stained with crimson gore, His blessed mouth poured out the fresh warm prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I say, not that that prayer was confined to His immediate executioners. I believe that it was a far-reaching prayer, which included Scribes and Pharisees, Pilate and Herod, Jews and Gentiles—yes, the whole human race, in a certain sense, since we were all concerned in that murder—but certainly the immediate persons upon whom that prayer was poured like precious nard were those who then and there were committing the brutal act of fastening Him to the accursed tree. How sublime is this prayer if viewed in such a light! It stands alone upon a mount of solitary glory! No other had been prayed like it before. It is true, Abraham and Moses and the Prophets had prayed for the wicked—but not for wicked men who had pierced their hands and feet!

It is true that Christians have since that day offered the same prayer, even as Stephen cried, "Lay not this sin to their charge," and many a martyr has made his last words at the stake words of pitying intercession for his persecutors. But you know where they learned this. Let me ask you, where did He learn it? Was not Jesus the Divine original? He learned it nowhere—it leaped up from His own Godlike Nature. A compassion peculiar to Himself dictated this originality of prayer. The inward royalty of His love suggested to Him so memorable an intercession—which may serve us for a pattern—but of which no pattern had existed before.

I feel as though I could better kneel before my Lord's Cross at this moment than stand in this pulpit to talk to you. I want to adore Him. I worship Him in heart for that prayer! If I knew nothing else of Him but this one prayer, I must adore Him—for that one matchless plea for mercy convinces me most overwhelmingly of the Deity of Him who offered it and fills my heart with reverent affection. Thus have I introduced to you our Lord's first vocal prayer upon the Cross. I shall now, if we are helped by God's Holy Spirit, make some use of it.

First, we shall view it as illustrative of our Savior's intercession. Secondly, we shall regard the text as instructive of the Church's work. Thirdly, we shall consider it as suggestive to the unconverted.

I. First, my dear Brethren, let us look at this very wonderful text as ILLUSTRATIVE OF OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION. He prayed for His enemies, then—He is praying for His enemies now. The past on the Cross was an earnest of the present on the Throne. He is in a higher place and in a nobler condition, but His occupation is the same—He continues, still, before the Eternal Throne, to present pleas on the behalf of guilty men, crying, "Father, O forgive them." All His intercession is, in a measure, like the intercession on Calvary and Calvary's cries may help us to guess the character of the whole of His intercession above.

The first point in which we may see the character of His intercession is this—it is most gracious. Those for whom our Lord prayed, according to the text, did not deserve His prayer. They had done nothing which could call forth from Him a benediction as a reward for their endeavors in His service. On the contrary, they were most undeserving persons who had conspired to put Him to death. They had crucified Him! Crucified Him wantonly and malignantly. They were even, then, taking away His innocent life. His clients were persons, who, so far from being meritorious, were utterly undeserving of a single good wish from the Savior's heart. They certainly never asked Him to pray for them—it was the last thought in their minds to say, "Intercede for us, You dying King! Offer petitions on our behalf, You Son of God!"

I will venture to believe the prayer itself, when they heard it, was either disregarded and passed over with contemptuous indifference, or perhaps it was caught at as a theme for jest. I admit that it seems to be too severe upon humanity to suppose it possible that such a prayer could have been the theme for laughter, and yet there were other things enacted around the Cross which were quite as brutal, and I can imagine that this, also, might have happened. Yet our Savior not only prayed for persons who did not deserve the prayer, but, on the contrary, merited a curse—persons who did not ask for the prayer and even scoffed at it when they heard it.

Even so in Heaven there stands the great High Priest, who pleads for guilty men—for guilty men, my Hearers! There are none on earth that deserve His intercession. He pleads for none on the supposition that they do deserve it. He stands there to plead as the Just One on the behalf of the unjust. Not if any man is righteous, but, "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." Remember, too, that our great Intercessor pleads for such as never asked Him to plead for them. His elect, while yet dead in trespasses and sins, are the objects of His compassionate intercessions and while they even scoff at His Gospel, His heart of love is entreating the favor of Heaven on their behalf.

See, then, Beloved, if such is the Truth of God, how sure you are to find favor with God who earnestly asks the Lord Jesus Christ to plead for you. Some of you, with many tears and much earnestness, have been beseeching the Savior to be your Advocate. Will He refuse you? Stands it to reason that He can? He pleads for those that reject His pleadings, much more for you who prize them beyond gold! Remember, my dear Hearer, if there is nothing good in you and if there is everything conceivable that is malignant and bad, yet none of these things can be any barrier to prevent Christ's exercising the office of Intercessor for you! Even for you He will plead. Come, put your case into His hands! For you He will find pleas which you cannot discover for yourselves and He will put the case to God for you as for His murderers, "Father, forgive them."

A second quality of His intercession is this—its careful spirit. You notice in the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Our Savior did, as it were, look His enemies through

and through to find something in them that He could urge in their favor. But He could see nothing until His wisely affectionate eyes lit upon their ignorance—"they know not what they do." How carefully He surveyed the circumstances, and the characters of those for whom He prayed! Just so it is with Him in Heaven. Christ is no careless Advocate for His people. He knows your precise condition at this moment and the exact state of your heart with regard to the temptation through which you are passing. More than that, He foresees the temptation which is awaiting you and in His intercession He takes note of the future event which His prescient eyes behold.

"Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." Oh, the condescending tenderness of our great High Priest! He knows us better than we know ourselves! He understands every secret grief and groan. You need not trouble yourself about the wording of your prayer—He will put the wording right. And even the understanding as to the exact petition, if you should fail in it, He cannot—for as He knows what is the mind of God—so He knows what is your mind, also. He can spy out some reason for mercy in you which you cannot detect in yourselves and when it is so dark and cloudy with your soul that you cannot discern a foothold for a plea that you may urge with Heaven, the Lord Jesus has the pleas ready-framed and petitions ready drawn up—and He can present them acceptable before the Mercy Seat. His intercession, then, you will observe, is very gracious and in the next place it is very thoughtful.

We must next note its earnestness. No one doubts who reads these words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that they were Heaven-piercing in their fervor. Brethren, you are certain, even without a thought, that Christ was terribly in earnest in that prayer. But there is an argument to prove that. Earnest people are usually witty and quick of understanding to discover anything which may serve their turn. If you are pleading for life and an argument for your being spared is asked of you, I will guarantee you that you will think of one when no one else might. Now, Jesus was so in earnest for the salvation of His enemies, that He struck upon an argument for mercy which a less anxious spirit would not have thought of—"They know not what they do."

Why, Sirs, that was in strictest justice but a scant reason for mercy! And indeed, ignorance, if it is willful, does not extenuate sin and yet the ignorance of many who surrounded the Cross was a willful ignorance. They should have known that He was the Lord of Glory. Was not Moses plain enough? Had not Elijah been very bold in his speech? Were not the signs and tokens such that one might as well doubt which is the sun in the firmament as the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah? Yet, for all that, the Savior, with marvelous earnestness and consequent dexterity, turns what might not have been a plea, into a plea, and puts it thus—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, how mighty are His pleas in Heaven, then, in their earnestness!

Do not suppose that He is less quick of understanding there, or less intense in the vehemence of His entreaties. No, my Brethren, the heart of Christ still labors with the eternal God. He is no slumbering Intercessor, but, for Zion's sake, He does not hold His peace—and for Jerusalem's sake He does not cease—nor will He, till her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns. It is interesting to note, in the fourth place, that the prayer here offered helps us to judge of His intercession in Heaven as to its continuance, perseverance and perpetuity. As I remarked before, if our Savior might have paused from intercessory prayer, it was surely when they fastened Him to the tree—when they were guilty of direct acts of deadly violence to His Divine Person, He might then have ceased to present petitions on their behalf. But sin

cannot tie the tongue of our interceding Friend.

Oh, what comfort is here! You have sinned, Believer, you have grieved His Spirit, but you have not stopped that potent tongue which pleads for you! You have been unfruitful, perhaps, my Brother, and like the barren tree you deserve to be cut down—but your lack of fruitfulness has not withdrawn the Intercessor from His place. He interposes at this moment, crying, "Spare it yet another year." Sinner, you have provoked God by long rejecting His mercy and going from bad to worse, but neither blasphemy nor unrighteousness, nor infidelity shall stop the Christ of God from urging the suit of the very chief of sinners! He lives and while He lives He pleads—and while there is a sinner upon earth to be saved, there shall be an Intercessor in Heaven to plead for him. These are but fragments of thought, but they will help you, I hope, to realize the intercession of your great High Priest.

Think yet again, this prayer of our Lord on earth is like His prayer in Heaven because of its wisdom. He seeks the best thing and that which His clients most need, "Father, forgive them." That was the great point in hand—they needed most of all, then and there, forgiveness from God. He does not say, "Father, enlighten them, for they know not what they do," for mere enlightenment would but have created torture of conscience and hastened on their Hell. No, He cries, "Father, forgive." And while He used His voice, the precious drops of blood which were then distilling from the nail wounds were pleading, too, and God heard and doubtless did forgive.

The first mercy which is necessary to guilty sinners is forgiven sin. Christ wisely prays for the blessing most needed. It is so in Heaven—He pleads wisely and prudently. Let Him alone, He knows what to ask for at the Divine hand! Go to the Mercy Seat and pour out your desires as best you can, but when you have done, always put it thus, "O my Lord Jesus, answer no desire of mine if it is not according to Your judgment. And if in anything that I have asked I have failed to seek for what I need, amend my pleading, for You are infinitely wiser than I." Oh, it is sweet to have a Friend at court to perfect our petitions for us before they come unto the great King!

I believe that there is never presented to God anything but a perfect prayer now. I mean that before the great Father of us all, no prayer of His people ever comes up imperfect. There is nothing left out and there is nothing to be erased, and this, not because their prayers were originally perfect in themselves, but because the Mediator makes them perfect through His infinite wisdom—and they come up before the Mercy Seat molded according to the mind of God Himself and He is sure to grant such prayers.

Once more, this memorable prayer of our crucified Lord was like His universal intercession in the matter of its prevalence. Those for whom He prayed were, many of them, forgiven. Do you remember that He said to His disciples when He bade them preach, "beginning at Jerusalem." And on that day when Peter stood up with the Eleven and charged the people that with wicked hands they had crucified and slain the Savior, 3,000 of these persons who were thus justly accused of His crucifixion became Believers in Him and were baptized in His name. That was an answer to Jesus' prayer! The priests were at the bottom of our Lord's murder—they were the most guilty—and it is said, "a great company, also, of the priests believed." Here was another answer to the prayer!

Since all men had their share representatively, Gentiles as well as Jews, in the death of Jesus, the Gospel was soon preached to the Jews and within a short time it was preached to the Gentiles, also. Was not this prayer, "Father, forgive them," like a stone cast into a lake, forming, at first, a narrow circle and then a wider ring and soon a larger sphere, until the whole lake is covered with circling waves? Such a prayer as this, cast into the whole world, first created a little ring of Jewish converts and of priests and then a wider circle of such as were beneath the Roman sway! And today its circumference is as wide as the globe itself, so that tens of thousands are saved through the prevalence of this one intercession, "Father, forgive them."

It is certainly so with Him in Heaven—He never pleads in vain. With bleeding hands, He yet won the day. With feet fastened to the wood, He was yet victorious. Forsaken of God and despised of the people, He was yet triumphant in His pleas. How much more so now the tiara is about His brow? How much more so now His hand grasps the universal scepter and His feet are shod with silver sandals and He is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords? If tears and cries out of weakness were Omnipotent, even more mighty, if possible, must be that sacred authority which, as the risen Priest, He claims when He stands before the Father's Throne to mention the Covenant which the Father made with Him. O you trembling Believers, trust Him with your concerns!

Come here, you guilty, and ask him to plead for you! O you that cannot pray, come, ask Him to intercede for you. Broken hearts and weary heads and disconsolate bosoms, come to Him who into the golden censer will put His merits and then place your prayers with them so that they shall come up as the smoke of perfume, even as a fragrant cloud into the nostrils of the Lord God of Hosts, who will smell a sweet savor and accept you and your prayers in the Beloved! We have now opened up more than enough room for your meditations at home this afternoon and, therefore, we leave this first point. We have had an illustration in the prayer of Christ on the Cross of what His prayers always are in Heaven.

II. Secondly, the text is INSTRUCTIVE OF THE CHURCH'S WORK. As Christ was, so His Church is to be in this world. Christ came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to minister—not to be honored, but to save others. His Church, when she understands her work, will perceive that she is not here to gather to herself wealth or honor, or to seek any temporal aggrandizement and position. She is here unselfishly to live, and if need be, unselfishly to die for the deliverance of the lost sheep, the salvation of lost men. Brethren, Christ's prayer on the Cross, I told you, was altogether an unselfish one. He does not remember Himself in it.

Such ought to be the Church's life-prayer, the Church's active interposition on the behalf of sinners. She ought to live never for her ministers or for herself, but always for the lost sons of men. Do you imagine that Churches are formed to maintain ministers? Do you conceive that the Church exists in this land merely that so much salary may be given to bishops and deans, and prebends and curates and I know not what? My Brethren, it were well if the whole thing were abolished if that were its only aim! The aim of the Church is not to provide backdoor relief for the younger sons of the nobility when they have not brains enough to win their livelihood any other way! Churches are not made so that men of ready speech may stand up on Sundays and talk and so win daily bread from their admirers!

No, there is another end and aim from this. These places of worship are not built that you may sit here comfortably and hear something that shall make you pass away your Sundays with pleasure. A Church in London which does not exist to do good in the slums and dens and kennels of the city is a Church that has no reason to justify its existence any longer! A Church that does not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight with evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood—a Church that does not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice and to hold up righteousness— is a Church that has no right to be! Not for yourself, O Church, do you exist, any more than Christ existed for Himself! His Glory was that He laid aside His Glory and the Glory of the Church is when she lays aside her respectability and her dignity and counts it to be her Glory to gather together the outcasts and her highest honor to seek amid the foulest mire the priceless jewels for which Jesus shed His blood!

To rescue souls from Hell and lead them to God, to hope, to Heaven— this is her heavenly occupation! O that the Church would always feel this! Let her have her bishops and her preachers and let them be supported and let everything be done for Christ's sake decently and in order, but let the end be looked to, namely, the conversion of the wandering, the teaching of the ignorant, the help of the poor, the maintenance of the right, the putting down of the wrong and the upholding at all hazards of the crown and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Now the prayer of Christ had a great spirituality of aim. You notice that nothing is sought for these people but that which concerns their souls, "Father forgive them." And I believe the Church will do well when she remembers that she wrestles not with flesh and blood, nor with principalities and powers, but with spiritual wickedness and that what she has to dispense is not the Law and Order by which magistrates may be upheld, or tyrannies pulled down, but the spiritual government by which hearts are conquered to Christ and judgments are brought into subjection to His Truth. I believe that the more the Church of God strains after, before God, the forgiveness of sinners and the more she seeks in her life prayer to teach sinners what sin is and what the blood of Christ is and what the Hell that must follow if sin is not washed out and what the Heaven is which will be ensured to all those who are cleansed from sin—the more she keeps to this—the better.

Press forward as one man, my Brethren, to secure the root of the matter in the forgiveness of sinners. As to all the evils that afflict humanity, by all means take your share in battling with them! Let temperance be maintained, let education be supported! Let reforms, political and ecclesiastical, be pushed forward as far as you have the time and effort to spare! But the first business of every Christian man and woman is with the hearts and consciences of men as they stand before the Everlasting God. O let nothing turn you aside from your Divine errand of mercy to undying souls! This is your one business. Tell sinners that sin will damn them— that Christ, alone, can take away sins—and make this the one passion of your souls, "Father, forgive them, forgive them! Let them know how to be forgiven. Let them be actually forgiven and let me never rest except as I am the means of bringing sinners to be forgiven, even the guiltiest of them."

Our Savior's prayer teaches the Church that while her spirit should be unselfish and her aim should be spiritual, the range of her mission is to be unlimited. Christ prayed for the wicked. What if I say the most wicked of the wicked, that ribald crew that had surrounded His Cross? He prayed for the ignorant. Does He not say, "They know not what they do"? He prayed for His persecutors—the very persons who were most at enmity with Him lay nearest to His heart! Church

of God, your mission is not to the respectable few who will gather about your ministers to listen respectfully to their words! Your mission is not to the elite and the eclectic, the intelligent who will criticize your words and pass judgment upon every syllable of your teaching! Your mission is not to those who treat you kindly, generously, affectionately!

Not to these, I mean, alone, though certainly to these as among the rest. But your great errand is to the harlot, to the thief, to the swearer and the drunkard, to the most depraved and debauched! If no one else cares for these, the Church always must, and if there are any who are first in her prayers it should be these who, alas, are generally last in our thoughts. The ignorant we ought diligently to consider. It is not enough for the preacher that he preaches so that those instructed from their youth up can understand him. He must think of those to whom the most common phrases of theological truth are as meaningless as the jargon of an unknown tongue. He must preach so as to reach the meanest comprehension, and if the ignorant many come not to hear him, he must use such means as best he may to induce them, no, compel them to hear the Good News.

The Gospel is meant, also, for those who persecute religion—it aims its arrows of love against the hearts of its foes. It there are any whom we should first seek to bring to Jesus, it should be just these who are the farthest off and most opposed to the Gospel of Christ. "Father, forgive them. If You pardon none besides, yet be pleased to forgive them." So, too, the Church should be earnest as Christ was. And if she is so, she will be quick to notice any ground of hope in those she deals with. She will be quick to observe any plea that she may use with God for their salvation. She must be hopeful, too, and surely no Church ever had a more hopeful sphere than the Church of this present age! If ignorance is a plea with God, look on the heathens at this day—millions of them never heard Messiah's name! Forgive them, great God, indeed they know not what they do!

If ignorance is some ground for hope, there is hope enough in this great city of London, for have we not around us hundreds of thousands to whom the simplest Truths of the Gospel would be the greatest novelties? Brethren, it is sad to think that this country should still lie under such a pall of ignorance, but the sting of so dread a fact is blunted with hope when we read the Savior's prayer aright—it helps us to hope while we cry, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is the Church's business to seek after the most fallen and the most ignorant and to seek them perseveringly. She should never stop her hand from doing good. If the Lord is coming tomorrow, it is no reason why you Christian people should subside into mere talkers and readers, meeting together for mutual comfort and forgetting the myriads of perishing souls.

If it is true that this world is going to pieces in a fortnight and that Louis Napoleon is the Apocalyptic beast—or if it is not true—I care not a fig! It makes no difference to my duty and does not change my service. Let my Lord come when He will, while I labor for Him I am ready for His appearing! The business of the Church is still to watch for the salvation of souls. If she stood gazing, as modern prophets would have her do—if she gave up her mission to indulge in speculative interpretations—she might well be afraid of her Lord's coming. But if she goes about her work and with incessant toil searches out her Lord's precious jewels, she shall not be ashamed when her Bridegroom comes!

My time has been much too short for so vast a subject as I have undertaken, but I wish I could speak words that were as loud as thunder, with a sense and earnestness as mighty as the

lightning! I would gladly excite every Christian here and kindle in him a right idea of what his work is as a part of Christ's Church. My Brethren, you must not live to yourselves! The accumulation of money, the bringing up of your children, the building of houses, the earning of your daily bread—all this you may do—but there must be a greater object than this if you are to be Christ-like, as you should be, since you are bought with Jesus' blood.

Begin to live for others! Make it apparent unto all men that you are not yourselves the end-all and be-all of your own existence, but that you are spending and being spent—that through the good you do to men God may be glorified and Christ may see in you His own image and be satisfied.

III. Time fails me, but the last point was to be a word SUGGESTIVE TO THE UNCOVETED. Listen attentively to these sentences. I will make them as terse and condensed as possible. Some of you here are not saved. Now, some of you have been very ignorant and when you sinned you did not know what you did. You knew you were sinners, you knew that, but you did not know the far-reaching guilt of sin. You have not been attending the House of Prayer long. You have not read your Bible. You have not Christian parents.

Now you are beginning to be anxious about your souls. Remember your ignorance does not excuse you, or else Christ would not say, "Forgive them." They must be forgiven, even those that know not what they do, and therefore they are individually guilty. But still that ignorance of yours gives you just a little gleam of hope. The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance! The God whom you have ignorantly forgotten is willing to pardon and ready to forgive. The Gospel is just this—trust Jesus Christ who died for the guilty and you shall be saved! O may God help you to do so this very morning and you will become new men and new women—a change will take place in you equal to a new birth—you will be new creatures in Christ Jesus!

But ah, my Friends, there are some here for whom even Christ Himself could not pray this prayer, in the widest sense at any rate, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," for you have known what you did, and every sermon you hear and especially every impression that is made upon your understanding and conscience by the Gospel adds to your responsibility and takes away from you the excuse of not knowing what you do! Ah, Sirs, you know that there is the world and Christ and that you cannot have both! You know that there is sin and God and that you cannot serve both! You know that there are the pleasures of evil and the pleasures of Heaven and that you cannot have both! Oh, in the light which God has given you, may His Spirit also come and help you to choose that which true wisdom would make you choose.

Decide today for God, for Christ, for Heaven! The Lord decide You for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 23:1-34.

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Luke 23,39-43 #3363 - Witnessing at the Cross

WITNESSING AT THE CROSS

NO. 3363

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 17, 1913.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And one of the malefactors who was hanged, railed on Him, saying,

If you are Christ, save Yourself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing amiss.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come

into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say

unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise."

Luke 23:39-43.

THE dying thief was certainly a very great wonder of Divine Grace. He has generally been looked upon from one point of view only—as a sinner called at the eleventh hour and, therefore, an instance of special mercy because he was so near to death. Enough has been made of that circumstance by others! To my mind, it is by no means the most important point in the narrative. Had the thief been predestined to come down from the Cross and live for half a century longer, his conversion would have been neither more nor less than it was. The work of Grace which enabled him to die in peace would, if it had been the Lord's will, have enabled him to live in holiness. We may well admire Divine Grace when it so speedily makes a man fit for the bliss of Heaven! But it is equally to be adored when it makes him ready for the battle of earth. To bear a saved sinner away from all further conflict is great Grace. But the power and love of God are, if anything, even more conspicuous when, like a sheep surrounded by wolves, or a spark in the midst of the sea, a Believer is enabled to live on in the teeth of an ungodly world and maintain his integrity to the end! Dear Friend, whether you die as soon as you are bornagain, or remain on earth for many years is comparatively a small matter—and will not materially alter your indebtedness to Divine Grace! In the one case the great Husbandman will show how He can bring His flowers speedily to perfection. And in the other He will prove how He can preserve them in blooming beauty despite the frosts and snows of earth's cruel winter! In either case your experience will reveal the same love and power.

There are other things, it seems to me, to be seen in the conversion of the thief besides the one single matter of his being brought to know the Lord when near to death's door. Observe the singular fact that our Lord Jesus Christ should die in the company of two malefactors. It was probably planned in order to bring Him shame and it was regarded by those who cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" as an additional ignominy. Their malice decreed that He should die as a criminal and with criminals—and in the center, between two—to show that they thought Him the worst of the three. But God, in His own way, baffled the malice of the foe and turned it to the triumph and Glory of His dear Son, for had there been no dying thief hanging at His side, then one of the most illustrious trophies of His love would not have been gained! And we would not have been able to sing to His praise—

"The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day— And there have I, though vile as he, Washed all my sins away!"

His enemies gave our Lord Jesus an opportunity for still continuing the seeking, as well as the saving of the lost! They found Him an occasion for manifesting His conquering Grace when they supposed they were heaping scorn upon Him. How truly did the Prophet in the Psalm say, "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision," for that which was meant to increase His misery revealed His majesty! Moreover, though it was intended to add an ingredient of bitterness to His cup, I do not doubt that it supplied Him with a draught of comfort. Nothing could so well have cheered the heart of Jesus and taken His mind off, for just an instant, His own hitter pangs, as having an object of pity before Him, upon whom He could pour His mercy! The thief's confession of faith and expiring prayer must have been music to his Savior's ears—the only music which could in any degree delight Him amid His terrible agonies. To hear and to answer the prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom," afforded our Lord a precious solace. An angel strengthened Him in the Garden, but here it was a man, nailed up at His side, who ministered consolation by the indirect, but very effective method of seeking help at His hands.

Furthermore, the longs-continued testimony and witness for Christ among men was at that time exceedingly feeble and ready to expire, but the thief's confession maintained it. The Apostles, where were they? They had fled. Those disciples who ventured near enough to see the Lord, scarcely remained within speaking distance. They were poor confessors of Christ, scarcely worthy of the name! Was the chain of testimony to be broken? Would none declare His Sovereign Power? No, the Lord will never let that testimony cease, and lo, He raises up a witness where least you would expect it—on a cross! One just ready to die bears witness to the Redeemer's innocence and to His assured coming to a Kingdom! As many of the boldest testimonies to Christ have come from the stake, so here was one that came from a cross and gained for the witness the honor of being the last testifier to Christ before He died! Let us always expect, then, dear Friends, that God will overrule the machinations of the foes of Christ so as to get honor from them. At all times of the world's history, when things appear to have gone to pieces and Satan seems to rule the hour, do not let us despair, but be quite sure that, somehow or other, the Light of God will come out of darkness and good out of evil!

We will now come close up to the dying thief and look, first, at his faith. Secondly, at his confession of faith. Thirdly, at his prayer of faith. And fourthly, at the answer of his faith. First, then, may the Holy Spirit help us concerning this dying malefactor, to consider—

I. HIS FAITH. It was of the operation of the Spirit of God and there was nothing in his

previous character to lead up to it. How came that thief to be a Believer in Jesus? You who carefully read the Gospels will have noticed that Matthew says (Matthew 27:44), "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." Mark also says, "They that were crucified with Him reviled Him." These two Evangelists plainly speak of both thieves as reviling our Lord! How are we to understand this? Would it be right to say that those two writers speak in broad terms of the thieves as a class because one of them so acted, just as we in common conversation speak of a company of persons doing such-and-such, when, in fact, the whole matter was the deed of one man of the party? Was it a loose way of speaking? I think not! I do not like the look of suppositions of error in the Inspired volume. Would it not be more reverent to the Word of God to believe that the thieves did both revile Jesus? May it not be true that, at the first, they both joined in saying, "If you are the Christ, save Yourself and us," but that afterwards, one, by a miracle of Sovereign Grace, was led to a change of mind and became a Believer? Or would this third theory meet the case—that at the first the thief who afterwards became a penitent, having no thought upon the matter, by his silence gave consent to his fellow's reviling so as fairly to come under the charge of being an accomplice therein—but when it gradually dawned upon his mind that he was under error as to this Jesus of Nazareth, it pleased God in Infinite Mercy to change his mind so that he became a confessor of the Truth of God, though he had at first silently assented to the blasphemy of his companion? It would be idle to dogmatize, but we will gather this lesson from it—that faith may enter the mind, notwithstanding the sinful state in which the man is found. Grace can transform a reviling thief into a penitent Believer!

Neither do we know the outward means which led to this man's conversion. We can only suppose that he was affected by seeing the Lord's patient demeanor, or, perhaps, by hearing that prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Surely there was enough in the sight of the Crucified Lord with the blessing of God's Spirit to turn a heart of stone into flesh! Possibly the inscription over the head of our

Volume 59 3Lord may have helped him—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Being a Jew, he knew something of the Scriptures, and putting all the facts together, may he not have seen in the prophecies a light which gathered around the head of the Sufferer and revealed Him as the true Messiah? Possibly the malefactor remembered Isaiah's words, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Or, perhaps, the saying of David, in the 22nd Psalm rushed upon his memory, "They pierced My hands and My feet." Other texts which he had learned in his youth at his mother's knee may have come before his mind—and putting all these together, he may have argued, "It may be. Perhaps it is. It is. It must be. I am sure it is. It is the Messiah, led as a lamb to the slaughter." All this is but our supposition and it leads me to remark that there is much faith in this world which comes, "not with observation," but is worked in men by unknown instrumentalities. And so long as it really exists, it matters very little how it entered the heart, for in every case it is the work of the Holy Spirit! The history of faith is of small importance compared with the quality of faith!

We do not know the origin of this man's faith, but we do know that it was amazing faith under the circumstances. I very gravely question whether there was ever greater faith in this world than the

faith of this thief, for he, beyond all others, realized the painful and shameful death of the Lord Jesus and yet believed! We hear of our Lord's dying upon the Cross, but we do not realize the circumstances and, indeed, even if we were to think upon that death very long and intently, we shall never realize the shame, weakness and misery which surrounded our Lord as that dying thief did, for he was suffering the pangs of crucifixion at the Savior's side and, therefore, to him it was no fiction, but a vivid reality! Before him was the Christ in all His nakedness and ignominy surrounded by the mocking multitude—and dying in pain and weakness—and yet he believed Him to be Lord and King! What do you think, Sirs? Some of you say you find it hard to believe in Jesus, though you know that He is exalted in the highest heavens. But had you seen Him on the Cross. Had you seen His marred Countenance and emaciated body, could you then have believed on Him and said, "Lord remember me when you come into Your Kingdom"? Yes, you could have done so if the Spirit of God had created faith in you like that of the thief! But it would have been faith of the first order, a jewel of priceless value! As I said before, so I say again— the vivid sympathy of the thief with the shame and suffering of the Lord rendered his faith remarkable in the highest degree!

This man's faith, moreover, was singularly clear and decided. He rolled his whole salvation upon the Lord Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." He did not offer a single plea fetched from his works, his present feelings, or his sufferings—he cast himself upon the generous heart of Christ! "You have a Kingdom—You are going to it. Lord, remember me when You come into it." That was all. I wish that some who have been professors for years had as clear a faith as the thief—but they are too often confused between Law and Gospel, works and Grace—while this poor felon trusted in nothing but the Savior and His mercy. Blessed be God for clear faith! I rejoice to see it in such a case as this, so suddenly worked and yet so perfect—so outspoken, so intelligent, so thoroughly restful!

That word, "restful," reminds me of a lovely characteristic of his faith, namely, its deep peace-giving power. There is a world of rest in Jesus in the thief's prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." A thought from Christ is all he needed! And after the Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise," we never read that the petitioner said another word. I did think that, perhaps, he would have said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord for that sweet assurance. Now I can die in peace." But his gratitude was too deep for words and his peace so perfect that calm silence seemed most in harmony with it. Silence is the thaw of the soul, though it is the frost of the mouth—and when the soul flows most freely, it feels the inadequacy of the narrow channel of the lips for its great water floods—

"Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise."

He asked no alleviation of pain, but in perfect satisfaction died as calmly as saints do in their beds!

This is the kind of faith which we must all have if we would be saved. Whether we know how we come by it or not, it must be a faith which rolls itself upon Christ and a faith which consequently brings peace to the soul. Do you possess such faith, dear Friend? If you do not, remember that you may die all of a sudden, and then into Paradise you will never enter! Look well to this and believe in the Lord Jesus at once! And now in the second place, we are going to look at this man's—

II. CONFESSION OF FAITH. He had faith and he confessed it. He could neither be baptized nor sit

at the Communion Table, nor unite with the Church below. He could not do any of those things which are most right and proper on the part of other Christians, but he did the best he could under the circumstances to confess his Lord!

He confessed Christ, first of all, almost of necessity, because a holy indignation made him speak out. He listened for a while to his brother thief, but while he was musing, the fire burned and then spoke he with his tongue, for he could no longer bear to hear the innocent Sufferer reviled. He said, "Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss." Did this poor thief speak out so bravely and can some of you silent Christians go up and down the streets and hear men curse and blaspheme the name of Christ—and not feel stirred in spirit to defend His cause? While men are so loud in their reviling, can you be quiet? The stones you tread on may well cry out against

Volume 59 5you! If all were Christians and the world teemed with Jesus' praise, we might, perhaps, afford to be silent. But, amidst abounding superstition and loud-mouthed infidelity, we are bound to show our colors and avow ourselves on Christ's side! We doubt not that the penitent thief would have owned his Lord apart from the railing of his comrade, but as it happened, that reviling was the provoking cause. Does no such cause arouse you? Can you play the coward at such a time as this?

Observe next, that he made a confession to an unsympathetic ear. The other thief does not seem to have made any kind of reply to him, but it is feared that he died in sullen unbelief. The believing thief made his confession where he could not expect to gain approbation, yet he made it none the less clearly. How is it that some dear friends who love the Lord have never confessed their faith even to their Christian Brothers and Sisters? You know how glad we would be to hear of what the Lord has done for you, but yet we have not heard it! There is a mother who would be so happy if she did but know that her boy was saved, or that her girl was converted—and you have refused her that joy by your silence! This poor thief spoke for Jesus to one who did not enter into his religious experience—and you have not even told yours to those who would have communed with you and rewarded you with comfort and instruction! I cannot understand cowardly lovers of Christ! How you manage to smother your love so long, I cannot tell. Love is usually like a cough, which speaks for itself, or a candle which must be seen, or a sweet perfume which is its own revealer! How is it that you have been able to conceal the day which has dawned in your hearts? What can be your motive for coming to Jesus only by night? I cannot understand your riddle and I hope you will explain it away. Do confess Jesus if you love Him, for He bids you do it and says, "He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in Heaven."

Observe well that this poor thief's confession of faith was attended with a confession of sin. Though he was dying a most horrible death by crucifixion, yet he confessed that he was suffering justly. "We indeed justly." He made his confession not only to God, but to men, justifying the law of his country under which he was then suffering. True faith confesses Christ and, at the same time, confesses its sin. There must be repentance of sin and acknowledgment of it before God if faith is to give proof of its authenticity. A faith that never had a tear in its eye, or a blush on its cheek, is

not the faith of God's elect! He who never felt the burden of sin, never felt the sweetness of being delivered from it! This poor thief is as clear in the avowal of his own guilt as in his witness to the Redeemer's innocence! Reader, could we say the same of you?

The thief's confession of faith was exceedingly honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ. He confessed that Jesus of Nazareth had done nothing amiss—when the crowd around the Cross were condemning Him with speech and gesture! He honored Christ by calling Him, Lord, while others mocked Him. He honored Christ by believing in His Kingdom even while Jesus was dying on the Cross and by entreating Him to remember him though he was in the agonies of death. Do you say that this was not much? Well, I will make bold to ask many a professor whether he could honestly say that throughout the whole of his life he has done as much to honor Christ as this poor thief did in those few minutes! Some of you certainly have not, for you have never confessed Him at all! And others have confessed Him in such a formal manner that there was nothing in it. Oh, there have been times when, had you played the man and said right straight out, in the midst of a ribald crew, "I do believe in Him whom you scoff and I know the sweetness of that dear name which you trample under foot," you might have been the means of saving many souls—but you were silent and whispered to yourself that prudence was the better part of valor and so you allowed the honor of your Master to be trailed in the mire! Oh, had you, my Sister, taken your stand in the family—had you said, "You may do what you will, but as for me, I will serve the Lord"—you might have honored God far more than you have done, for I fear you have been living in a halting, hesitating style, giving way to a great deal which you knew was wrong, not bearing your protest, not rebuking your brother in his iniquity, but studying your own peace and comfort instead of seeking the Redeemer's Glory! We have heard people talk about this dying thief as if he never did anything for his Master, but let me ask the Christian Church if it has not members in its midst—grayhaired members, too, who have never, through 50 years of profession, borne one such bravely honest and explicit testimony for Christ as this man did while he was agonizing on a cross? Remember, the man's hands and feet were tortured and he was suffering from that natural fever which attends upon crucifixion! His spirit must have melted within him with his dying grief—and yet he was as bold in rebuke, as composed in prayer, and as calm in spirit as if he were suffering nothing! And thus he reflected much Glory upon his Lord.

One other point about this man's confession is worthy of notice, namely, that he was evidently anxious to change the mind of his companion. He rebuked him and he reasoned with him. Dear Friends, I must again put a personal question. Are there not many professing Christians who have never manifested a tithe as much anxiety for the souls of others as this thief felt? You have been a Church member 10 years, but did you ever say as much to your brother as this dying thief said to the one who was hanging near him? Well, you have meant to do so. Yes, but did you ever do it? You reply that you have been very glad to join others in a meeting. I know that, too, and so far so good! But did you ever personally say as much to another as this dying man did to his old companion? I fear that some of you cannot say so. I, for my part, bless and magnify the Grace of God which gave this man one of the sweet fruits of the Spirit, namely, holy charity towards the soul of another so soon after he, himself, had come to believe in Jesus! May we, all of us, have it yet more and

Volume 59 7more! So much for the confession of his faith. Now a little, in the third place, about—

III. HIS PRAYER OF FAITH. "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." He ad

dressed the dying Savior as Divine. Wonderful faith this, to call Him Lord who was "a worm and no man," and was hanging there upon the Cross to die! What shall we say of those who, now that He is exalted in the highest heavens, yet refuse to acknowledge His Deity? This man had a clearer knowledge of Christ than they have! The Lord take the scales from their eyes and make them pray to Jesus as Divine!

He prayed to Him, also, as having a kingdom. That needed faith, did it not? He saw a dying Man in the hands of His foes nailed to the Cross— and yet he believed that He would come into a kingdom! He knew that Jesus would die before long, the marks of the death-agony were upon Him—and yet he believed that He would come to a kingdom! O glorious faith! Dear Friend, do you believe in Christ's Kingdom? Do you believe that He reigns in Heaven and that He will come a second time to rule over all the earth? Do you believe in Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords? Then pray to Him as such, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." May God give you the faith which set this thief a praying in so excellent a fashion!

Observe that his prayer was for a spiritual blessing only. The other thief said, "Save Yourself and us!" He meant, "Save us from this cross. Deliver us from the death which now threatens us!" He sought temporal benefits, but this man asked only to be remembered by Christ in His Kingdom. Do your prayers run that way, dear Friends? Then I bless the Lord that He has taught you to seek eternal, rather than temporal blessings! If a sick man cares more for pardon than for health, it is a good sign. Soul mercies will be prized above all others where faith is in active exercise.

Observe how humbly he prays. He did not ask for a place at Christ's right hand. He did not, in fact, ask the Lord to do anything for him, but only to "remember" him. Yet that, "remember," is a great word and he meant much by it. "Do give a thought to Your poor companion who now confesses his faith in You. Do in Your Glory dart one recollection of Your love upon poor me and think on me for good." It was a very humble prayer and all the sweeter for its lowliness. It showed his great faith in Jesus, far he believed that even to be remembered by Him would be enough. "Give me but the crumbs that fall from Your table, and they shall suffice me. But a thought, Lord Jesus, but one thought from Your loving mind, and that shall satisfy my soul."

Did not his prayer drip with faith as a honeycomb with honey? It seems to me as if it laid soaking in his faith till it was saturated through and through with it, for he prays so powerfully, albeit so humbly. Consider what his character had been, and yet he says, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Note well that it is a thief—an outcast, a criminal on the gallows who thus prays! He is an outcast by his country's laws and yet he turns to the King of Heaven and asks to be remembered! Bad as he is, he believes that the Lord Jesus will have mercy upon him! Oh, brave faith!

We see how strong that faith was because he had no invitation to pray. I do not know that he had ever heard Christ preach. No Apostle had said to him, "Come to Christ and you will find mercy," and yet he came to Jesus! Here comes an uninvited guest in the sweet bravery of holy confidence in Christ's majestic love—he comes boldly and pleads, "Lord, remember me!" It was strong faith which thus pleaded. Remember, too, that he was upon the verge of death. He knew that he could not live very long and probably expected the Roman bone-breaker to give him, very soon, the final

blow! But in the very hour and article of death he cried, "Lord, remember me," with the strong confidence of a mighty faith. Glory be to God who worked such a faith in such a man as this! We have done when we have mentioned, in the fourth place—

IV. THE ANSWER TO HIS FAITH. We will only say that his faith brought him to Paradise. We had a Para

dise, once, and the first Adam lost it. Paradise has been regained by the Second Adam, and He has prepared for Believers an Eden above, fairer than that first Garden of delights below! Faith led the dying thief to be with Christ in Paradise which was best of all! "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Whatever the joy of Christ, and the Glory of Christ, the thief was there to see it and to share it as soon as Christ Himself!

And it brought him Paradise that very day. Sometimes a crucified man will be two or three days a-dying. Jesus, therefore, assures him that he shall not have long to suffer and confirms it with a, "verily," which was our Lord's strong word of asseveration, "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Such a portion will faith win for each of us, not today, perhaps, but one day. If we believe in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, we shall be with Him in the delights and happiness of the spirit world and with Him in the Paradise of everlasting Glory. If we commenced to believe at once and were to die immediately, we would be with Christ at once, as surely as if we had been converted 50 years ago! You cannot tell how short your life will be, but it is well to be ready. A friend was here last Lord's-Day of whom I heard this morning that he was ill—and in another hour that he was dead. It was short work. He was struck down and gone at once. That may be the lot of any one of you. And if it should be, you will have no cause whatever to fear it if you now, like the thief, trust yourself wholly in Jesus' hands, crying, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."

The lesson of our text is not merely that Christ can save in our last extremity, though that is true, but that now, at this moment, Jesus is able to save us, and that, if saved at all, salvation must be an immediate and complete act, so that, come life or come death, we are perfectly saved! It

Volume 59 9will not take the Lord long to raise the dead—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible—and the Lord takes no time in regenerating a soul. Dead souls live in an instant when the breath of the Spirit quickens them! Faith brings instantaneous pardon! There is no course of probation to go through! There are no attainments to be sought after and no protracted efforts to be made in order to be saved. You are saved if you believe in Jesus! The finished work of Christ is yours. You are God's beloved, accepted, forgiven, adopted child! Saved you are, and saved you shall be forever and ever if you believe!

Instantaneous salvation! Immediate salvation! This, the Spirit of God gives to those who trust in Jesus! You need not wait till tomorrow's sun has dawned. Talk not of a more convenient season. Sitting where you are, the Almighty Grace of God can come upon you and save you—and this shall be a sign unto you that Christ is born in your heart, the hope of Glory—when you believe in Him as your Pardon, Righteousness, and All-in-All, you shall have peace. If you do but trust yourself in Jesus' hands, you are a saved soul and the angels in Heaven are singing high praises to God and the Lamb on your account! Farewell.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

1 Corinthians 1:1-24.

Verse 1. Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother. This brother had been put to great shame. He was beaten before the judgment seat, if you remember, and now he has the great and lasting honor of being mentioned by the Apostle with himself. God will honor those who bear dishonor for His name's sake. Be not ashamed even to be beaten for Christ—the stripes are stripes of glory!

2. Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. The Epistles were written to distinct churches, but they have a bearing upon all Christians. Hence the Apostle says, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Let us thank God no Scripture is of private interpretation—every promise belongs to all the Seed. If you are a Believer, you may freely appropriate to yourselves whatever was said of old to any individual Believer, or to any congregation of Believers!

3, 4. Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the Grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ. Paul is a great preacher of Divine Grace and, therefore, he is a great giver of thanks. Grace should be followed with thankfulness. "I thank my God." What a beautiful expression! Not only, "I thank God," but, "I thank my God." He has God in possession! He has taken Him to be his own forever and ever! Beloved, have we all done the same? Can we say, "I thank my God"? You notice how often Paul, in the first ten verses mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it is 11 times. He was full of Christ. Not only did he love Christ in his heart, but he had Christ's name continually on his tongue, for he was not ashamed of the sweet name of Jesus Christ! Honey in the mouth, music in the ear, Heaven in the heart is that sweet name of Jesus!

5. That in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge. The church of Corinth was a church of all the talents—it was not, however, a church so much of all the Graces, and so it was a very poor example for us. I sometimes think that its mode of worship is recorded rather as a warning beacon than as an example to us. It caused, incidentally through the abundance of their gifts and everybody wanting to exercise his gift, great divisions, and there was an absence of humility and love in the church. However, Paul is thankful for what they have.

6, 7. Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. So that you come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a fine trait in their character—they did look to the Second Advent—it operated upon them, it helped them in many ways. We cannot now mention all the holy uses which lie in the warning for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it ought to be a good description of all Christians.

8, 9. Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful. Blessed is His name that He is. We are often very unfaithful. Man is always so, but "God is faithful."

9, 10. By whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Where it is not so, the life of piety seems to ooze away. The

blessing of God cannot rest upon a church unless we dwell together in unity, and for unity it is necessary that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11-15. For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that everyone of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. Lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name. It may have been an accidental circumstance that he did not happen to have baptized them, but he is glad of it, for he says that in the temper they were in, some of them would have made a boast of it.

16, 17. And I baptized also the household of Stephanus: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize,

Volume 59 11 but to preach the Gospel. There were other people who could baptize for him. It was enough that he should concentrate all his energies upon that one matter of preaching the Gospel—not that he neglected the Divine command—but that it was not necessary that he, any more than his Master, should personally baptize, for we read that, "Jesus Christ baptized not, but His disciples." Not to put a dishonor upon the ordinance, but to let us see that the ordinance does not depend upon the man, but upon that sacred name into which we are baptized—and upon the true faith of the person baptized.

17. Not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect. A very remarkable passage! Paul could have used the wisdom of words. In some of his Epistles he gives us a specimen of his mighty rhetoric. He was a born master of speech. There was a touch of poetry in him and always a high logical power, but he would not use it in his preaching, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect. You may do what you like with human wisdom—put a bit into its mouth and try to lead it into obedience to Christ—but somehow or other its tendency is to rebel against Him!

18-21. For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God. You have only to study the history of the world at the time when Paul was writing, and you will see that the "world, by wisdom knew not God." It had made itself exceedingly philosophical and sage, but if you weigh its wisest conclusions, you will find that they were only polished folly. There is nothing left us of all the wisdom of that period! Time itself has proved it—no, has disproved it!

21, 22. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign. Some miracle, something that shall attest it in a supernatural way.

22-24. And the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Beloved, you know how true this is! It has been a wonderful power in you, and this day it is the only wisdom which you desire to possess!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 23,40-42 #1881 - The Dying Thief in a New Lig

THE DYING THIEF IN A NEW LIGHT

NO. 1881

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 31, 1886,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1885.

"But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God,

seeing you are in the same condemnation?

And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds:

but this Man has done nothing wrong.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when

You come into Your Kingdom."

Luke 23:40-42.

A GREAT many persons, whenever they hear of the conversion of the dying thief, remember that he was saved in the very article of death and they dwell upon that fact, and that, alone. He has always been quoted as a case of salvation at the 11th hour and so, indeed, he is. In his case it is proven that as long as a man can repent, he can obtain forgiveness. The Cross of Christ avails even for a man hanging on a gallows and drawing near to his last breath. He who is mighty to save was mighty, even during His own death, to pluck others from the grasp of the Destroyer, though they were in the act of expiring.

But that is not everything which the story teaches us and it is always a pity to look exclusively upon one point—and thus to miss everything else—perhaps miss that which is more important! So often has this been the case that it has produced a sort of revulsion of feeling in certain minds, so that they have been driven in a wrong direction by their wish to protest against what they think to be a common error. I read the other day that this story of the dying thief ought not to be taken as an encouragement to death-bed repentance! Brothers, if the author meant—and I do not think he did—that this ought never to be so used as to lead people to postpone repentance to a dying bed, he spoke correctly. No Christian man could or would use it so injuriously—he must be hopelessly bad who would draw from God's long-suffering an argument for continuing in sin!

I trust, however, that the narrative is not often so used, even by the worst of men, and I feel sure that it will not be so used by any of you. It cannot be properly turned to such a purpose—it might

be used as an encouragement to thieving just as much as to the delay of repentance. I might say, "I may be a thief because this thief was saved," just as rationally as I might say, "I may put off repentance because this thief was saved when he was about to die." The fact is, there is nothing so good but men can pervert it into evil if they have evil hearts! The justice of God is made

Volume 32 1a motive for despair and His mercy an argument for sin! Wicked men will drown themselves in the rivers of the Truth of God as readily as in the pools of error! He that has a mind to destroy himself can choke his soul with the Bread of life, or dash himself in pieces against the Rock of Ages. There is no doctrine of the Grace of God so gracious that graceless men may not turn it into licentiousness.

I venture, however, to say that if I stood by the bedside of a dying man, tonight, and I found him anxious about his soul, but fearful that Christ could not save him because repentance had been put off so late, I would certainly quote the dying thief to him—and I would do it with good conscience—and without hesitation. I would tell him that, though he was as near to dying as the thief upon the cross was, yet if he repented of his sin and turned his face believingly to Christ, he would find eternal life. I would do this with all my heart, rejoicing that I had such a story to tell one at the gates of eternity! I do not think that I would be censured by the Holy Spirit for thus using a narrative which He has, Himself, recorded— recorded with the foresight that it would be so used. I would feel, at any rate, in my own heart, a sweet conviction that I had treated the subject as I ought to have treated it—and as it was intended to be used for men in extremis whose hearts are turning towards the living God. Oh, yes, poor Soul, whatever your age, or whatever the period of life to which you have come, you may now find eternal life by faith in Christ!—

"The dying thief rejoiced to see That Fountain in his day

And there may you, though vile as he,

Wash all your sins away."

Many good people think that they ought to guard the Gospel, but it is never so safe as when it stands out in its own naked majesty! It needs no covering from us. When we protect it with provisos, guard it with exceptions and qualify it with observations, it is like David in Saul's armor—it is hampered and hindered and you may even hear it cry, "I cannot go with these." Let the Gospel alone and it will save! Qualify it and the salt has lost its savor. I will venture to put it thus to you. I have heard it said that few are ever converted in old age and this is thought to be a statement which will prove exceedingly awakening and impressive for the young. It certainly wears that appearance, but, on the other hand, it is a statement very discouraging to the old! I object to the frequent repetition of such statements, for I do not find their counterpart in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles!

Assuredly our Lord spoke of some who entered the vineyard at the 11th hour of the day. And among His miracles, He not only saved those who were dying, but even raised the dead! Nothing can be concluded from the Words of the Lord Jesus against the salvation of men at any hour or age! I tell you, that in the business of your acceptance with God, through faith in Christ Jesus, it does not matter what age you are! The same promise is to each of you, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." And whether you are in the earliest stage of life, or are within a few hours of eternity, if you fly for refuge, now, to the hope set before you in the Gospel, you shall be

saved! The Gospel that I preach excludes none on the ground either of age or character!

Whoever you may be, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," is the message we have to deliver to you! If we address to you the longer form of the Gospel, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," this is true of every living person, be his age whatever it may! I am not afraid that this story of the dying and repenting thief who went straight from the cross to the crown, will be used by you wrongly, but if you are wicked enough to use it so, I cannot help it. It will only fulfill that solemn Scripture which says that the Gospel is a savor of death unto death to some, even that very Gospel which is a savor of life unto life to others!

But I do not think, dear Friends, that the only specialty about the thief is the lateness of his repentance. So far from being the only point of interest, it is not even the chief point! To some minds, at any rate, other points will be even more remarkable. I want to show you very briefly that there was a specialty in his case as to the means of his conversion. Secondly, a specialty in his faith. Thirdly, a specialty in the result of his faith while he was here below. And, fourthly, a specialty in the promise won by his faith—the promise fulfilled to him in Paradise.

I. First, then, I think you ought to notice very carefully THE SINGULARITY AND SPECIALITY OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THE THIEF WAS CONVERTED.

How do you think it was? Well, we do not know. We cannot tell. It seems to me that the man was an unconverted, impenitent thief when they nailed him to the cross because one of the Evangelists says, "The thieves, also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." I know that this may have been a general statement and that it is reconcilable with its having been done by one thief, only, according to the methods commonly used by critics, but I am not enamored of critics even when they are friendly. I have such respect for Revelation that I never, in my own mind, permit the idea of discrepancies and mistakes—and when the Evangelist says, "they," I believe he meant, "they," and that both these thieves did, at the beginning of their crucifixion, rail at the Christ with whom they were crucified. It would appear that by some means, or other, this thief must have been converted while he was on the cross. Assuredly nobody preached a sermon to him, no evangelistic address was delivered at the foot of his cross and no meeting was held for special prayer on his account. He does not even seem to have had an instruction, or an invitation, or an expostulation addressed to him—and yet this man became a sincere and accepted Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Dwell upon this fact, if you please, and note its practical bearing upon the cases of many around us. There are many among my hearers who have been instructed from their childhood, who have been admonished, warned, entreated, invited and yet they have not come to Christ—while this man, without any of these advantages—nevertheless believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and found eternal life! O you that have lived under the sound of the Gospel from your childhood, the thief does not comfort you, but he accuses you! What are you doing to abide so long in unbelief? Will you never believe the testimony of Divine Love? What more shall I say to you? What more can anyone say to you?

What do you think could have converted this poor thief? It strikes me that it may have been—it must have been—the sight of our great Lord and Savior! There was, to begin with, our Savior's wonderful behavior on the road to the Cross. Perhaps the robber had mixed up with all sorts of

society, but he had never seen a Man like this. Never had cross been carried by a Cross-Bearer of His look and fashion. The robber wondered who this meek and majestic Person could be. He heard the women weep and he wondered, in himself, whether anybody would ever weep for him. He thought that this must be some very singular Person that the people should stand about Him with tears in their eyes. When he heard that mysterious Sufferer say so solemnly, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but for your children," he must have been struck with wonder! When he came to think, in his death-pangs, of the singular look of pity which Jesus cast on the women and of the self-forgetfulness which gleamed from His eyes, he was smitten with a strange relenting—it was as if an angel had crossed his path and opened his eyes to a new world—and to a new form of manhood, the likes of which he had never seen before.

He and his companion were coarse, rough fellows. This was a delicately formed and fashioned Being, of superior order to himself, yes, and of superior order to any other of the sons of men! Who could He be? What must He be? Though he could see that He suffered and fainted as He went along, he marked that there was no word of complaining, no note of execration in return for the reviling cast upon Him. His eyes looked love on those who glared on Him with hate! Surely that march along the Via Dolorosa was the first part of the sermon which God preached to that bad man's heart. It was preached to many others who did not regard its teaching, but upon this man, by God's special Grace, it had a softening effect when he came to think over it and consider it. Was it not a likely and convincing means of Grace?

When he saw the Savior surrounded by the Roman soldiers—saw the executioners bring forth the hammers and the nails and lay Him down upon His back and drive the nails into His hands and feet—this crucified criminal was startled and astonished as he heard Him say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He, himself, had probably met his executioners with a curse, but he heard this Man breathe a prayer to the great Father! And, as a Jew, as he probably was, he understood what was meant by such a prayer. But it did astound him to hear Jesus pray for his murderers. That was a petition, the like of which he had never heard nor even dreamed of! From whose lips could it come but from the lips of a Divine Being? Such a loving, forgiving, God-like prayer proved Him to be the Messiah! Who else had ever prayed so? Certainly not David and the kings of Israel, who, on the contrary, in all honesty and heartiness imprecated the wrath of God upon their enemies! Elijah himself would not have prayed in that fashion, rather would he have called fire from Heaven on the centurion and his company. It was a new, strange sound to him. I do not suppose that he appreciated it to the fullest, but I can well believe that it deeply impressed him and made him feel that his Fellow-Sufferer was a Being about whom there was an exceedingly mystery of goodness.

And when the Cross was lifted up, that thief hanging on his own cross looked around and I suppose he could see that inscription written in three languages—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." If so, that writing was his little Bible, his New Testament—and he interpreted it by what he knew of the Old Testament. Putting this and that together—that strange Person, incarnate loveliness, all patience and all majesty, that strange prayer and now this singular inscription, surely he who knew the Old Testament, as I have no doubt he did, would say to himself, "Is this He? Is this truly the King of the Jews? This is He who worked miracles, raised the dead and said that He was the Son of God—is it all true and is He really our Messiah?" Then he would remember the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and

acquainted with grief. Surely, He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "Why," he would say to himself, "I never understood that passage in the Prophet Isaiah before, but it must point to Him! The chastisement of our peace is upon Him. Can this be He who cried in the Psalms—'they pierced My hands and My feet'"?

As he looked at Him again, he felt in his soul, "It must be He! Could there be another so like He?" He felt conviction creeping over his spirit. Then he looked again and he marked how all men down below rejected, despised and hissed at Him. They hooted Him and all this would make the case the more clear. "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him."

Perhaps this dying thief read the Gospel out of the lips of Christ's enemies. They said—"He saved others." "Ah!" he thought, "did He save others? Why could He not save me?" What a grand bit of Gospel that was for the dying thief—"He saved others!" I think I could swim to Heaven on that plank—"He saved others" and, if He saved others, He can surely save me!

Thus the very things that the enemies disdainfully threw at Christ would be Gospel to this poor dying man. When it has been my misery to read any of the wretched prints that are sent us out of scorn, in which our Lord is held up to ridicule, I have thought, "Why, perhaps those who read these loathsome blasphemies may, nevertheless, learn the Gospel from them!" You may pick a jewel from a dunghill and find its radiance undiminished! And you may gather the Gospel from a blasphemous mouth and it shall be, none the less, the Gospel of salvation! Perhaps this man learned the Gospel from those who jested at our dying Lord and so the servants of the devil were unconsciously made to be the servants of Christ!

But, after all, surely that which won him most must have been to look at Jesus, again, as He was hanging upon the cruel tree. Possibly nothing about the physical Person of Christ would be attractive to him, for His visage was more marred than that of any man and His form more than the sons of men. But there must have been in that blessed face a singular charm. Was it not the very image of perfection? As I conceive the face of Christ, it was very different from anything that any painter has yet been able to place upon his canvas. It was all goodness, kindness and unselfishness—and yet it was a royal face! It was a face of superlative justice and unrivalled tenderness. Righteousness and uprightness sat upon His brow, but infinite pity and goodwill to men had also taken up their abode. It was a face that would have struck you at once as one by itself, never to be forgotten, never to be fully understood. It was all sorrow, yet all love! It was all meekness, yet all resolution! All wisdom, yet all simplicity! The face of a child, or an angel and yet peculiarly the face of a Man. Majesty and misery, suffering and sacredness were strangely combined in it. He was evidently the Lamb of God and the Son of Man.

As the robber looked, he believed. Is it not amazing—the very sight of the Master won him? The sight of the Lord in agony, shame and death! Scarcely a word. Certainly no sermon, no attending worship on the Sabbath. No reading of gracious books; no appeal from mother, or teacher, or friend. The sight of Jesus won him! I put it down as a very singular thing, a thing for you and for me to remember and dwell upon with quite as much vividness as we do upon the lateness of this robber's conversion!

Oh, that God in His mercy might convert everybody in this Tabernacle! Oh, that I could have a share in it by the preaching of His Word! But I will be equally happy if you get to Heaven anyway—yes, if the Lord should take you there without outward ministries, leading you to Jesus by some simple method such as He adopted with this thief! If you do but get there, He shall have the Glory for it, and His poor servant will be overjoyed! Oh, that you would now look to Jesus and live! Before your eyes He is set forth, evidently crucified among you. Look to Him and be saved, even at this hour!

II. But now I want you to think with me a little upon THE SPECIALITY OF THIS MAN'S FAITH, for I think it was a very singular faith that this man exerted towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

I greatly question whether the equal and the parallel of the dying thief's faith will be readily found outside the Scriptures, or even in the Scriptures!

Observe that this man believed in Christ when he literally saw Him dying the death of a felon, under circumstances of the greatest personal shame! You have never realized what it was to be crucified. None of you could do that, for the sight has never been seen in our day in England. There is not a man or woman here who has ever realized in their own mind the actual death of Christ. It stands beyond us. This man saw it with his own eyes and for him to call Him, "Lord," who was hanging on a gallows, was no small triumph of faith! For him to ask Jesus to remember him when He came into His Kingdom, though he saw Jesus bleeding His life away and hounded to death, was a splendid act of reliance! For him to commit his everlasting destiny into the hands of One who was, to all appearance, unable, even, to preserve His own life, was a noble achievement of faith! I say that this dying thief leads the van in the matter of faith, for what he saw of the circumstances of the Savior was calculated to contradict rather than help his confidence! What he saw was to his hindrance rather than to his help, for he saw our Lord in the very extremity of agony and death—and yet he believed in Him as the King shortly to come into His Kingdom!

Remember, too, that at that moment when the thief believed in Christ, all the disciples had forsaken Him and fled. John might be lingering at a little distance and holy women may have stood farther off, but no one was present to bravely champion the dying Christ. Judas had sold Him, Peter had denied Him and the rest had forsaken Him! And it was then that the dying thief called Him, "Lord," and said, "Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." I call that splendid faith! Why, some of you do not believe even though you are surrounded with Christian friends—even though you are urged on by the testimony of those whom you regard with love! But this man, all alone, comes out and calls Jesus his Lord! No one else was confessing Christ at that moment—no revival was around him with enthusiastic crowds—he was all by himself as a confessor of his Lord. After our Lord was nailed to the tree, the first to bear witness for Him was this thief. The centurion bore witness afterwards, when our Lord expired, but this thief was a lone confessor, holding on to Christ when nobody would say, "Amen" to what he said. Even his fellow thief was mocking at the crucified Savior, so that this man shone as a lone star in the midnight darkness. O Sirs, dare you be Daniels? Dare you stand alone? Would you dare to stand out amidst a ribald crew and say, "Jesus is my King. I only ask Him to remember me when He comes into His Kingdom"? Would you be likely to proclaim such a faith when priests and scribes, princes and people were all mocking at the Christ and deriding Him? Brothers, the dying robber exhibited marvelous faith and I beg you to think of this the next time you speak of him.

And it seems to me that another point adds splendor to that faith, namely, that he himself was in extreme torture. Remember, he was crucified. It was a crucified man trusting in a crucified Christ! Oh, when our frame is racked with torture; when the most tender nerves are pained; when our body is hung up to die by we know not what great length of torment—then to forget the present and live in the future is a grand achievement of faith! While dying, to turn one's eyes to Another dying at your side and trust your soul with Him is very marvelous faith! Blessed thief, because they put you down at the bottom as one of the least of saints, I think that I must bid you come up higher and take one of the uppermost seats among those who, by faith have glorified the Christ of God!

Why, see, dear Friends, once more, the specialty of this man's faith was that he saw so much though his eyes had been opened for so short a time! He saw the future world! He was not a believer in annihilation, or in the possibility of a man's not being immortal! He evidently expected to be in another world and to be in existence when the dying Lord should come into His Kingdom! He believed all that and it is more than some do nowadays. He also believed that Jesus would have a Kingdom, a Kingdom after He was dead, a Kingdom though He was crucified! He believed that He was winning for Himself a Kingdom by those nailed hands and pierced feet! This was intelligent faith, was it not? He believed that Jesus would have a Kingdom in which others would share and, therefore, he aspired to have his portion in it. But yet he had fit views of himself and, therefore, he did not say, "Lord, let me sit at Your right hand," or, "Let me share in the dainties of Your palace." He only said, "Remember me. Think of me. Cast an eye my way. Think of Your poor dying comrade on the cross at Your right hand. Lord, remember me. Remember me." I see deep humility in the prayer and yet a sweet, joyous, confident exaltation of the Christ at the time when the Christ was in His deepest humiliation!

Oh, dear Sirs, if any of you have thought of this dying thief only as one who put off repentance, I want you now to think of him as one that did greatly and grandly believe in Christ and oh, that you would do the same! Oh, that you would put a great confidence in my great Lord! Never did a poor sinner trust Christ too much. There was never a case of a guilty one who believed that Jesus could forgive him and, afterwards, found that He could not—who believed that Jesus could save him on the spot and then woke up to find that it was a delusion. No! Plunge into this river of confidence in Christ! The waters are waters to swim in, not to drown in! Never did a soul perish that glorified Christ by a living, loving faith in Him! Come, then, with all your sin, whatever it may be—with all your deep depression of spirit, with all your agony of conscience—come along with you and grasp my Lord and Master with both hands of your faith and He shall be yours and you shall be His—

"Turn to Christ your longing eyes, View His bloody Sacrifice! See in Him your sins forgiven, Pardon, holiness and Heaven! Glorify the King of Kings, Take the peace the Gospel brings."

I think that I have shown you something special in the means of the thief's conversion and in his faith in our dying Lord.

III. But now, thirdly, as God shall help me, I wish to show you another specialty, namely, in THE RESULT OF HIS FAITH.

I have heard people say, "Well, you see, the dying thief was converted, but then he was not baptized! He never went to communion and never joined the church!" He could not do either and that which God Himself renders impossible to us, He does not demand of us. He was nailed to a

cross—how could he be baptized? But he did a great deal more than that, for if he could not carry out the outward signs, he most manifestly exhibited the things which they signified, which, in his condition, was better still!

This dying thief, first of all, confessed the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the very essence of Baptism. He confessed Christ. Did he not acknowledge Him to his fellow thief? It was as open a confession as he could make it. Did he not acknowledge Christ before all that were gathered around the Cross who were within hearing? It was as public a confession as he could possibly cause it to be! Yet certain cowardly fellows claim to be Christians though they have never confessed Christ to a single person—and then they quote this poor thief as an excuse! Are they nailed to a cross? Are they dying in agony? Oh, no, and yet they talk as if they could claim the exemption which these circumstances would give them. What a dishonest piece of business!

The fact is that our Lord requires an open confession as well as a secret faith. And if you will not render it, there is no promise of salvation for you, but a threat of being denied at the last! The Apostle puts it, "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." It is stated in another place this way—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"—that is Christ's way of making the confession of Him. If there is a true faith, there must be a declaration of it. If you are candles and God has lit you, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." Soldiers of Christ must, like her Majesty's soldiers, wear their uniforms—and if they are ashamed of them—they ought to be drummed out of the regiment! They are not honest soldiers who refuse to march in rank with their comrades. The very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can expect of us is that we confess Him to the best of our power. If you are nailed up to a cross, I will not invite you to be baptized. If you are fastened up to a tree to die, I will not ask you to come into this pulpit and declare your faith, for you cannot. But you are required to do what you can do, namely, to make as distinct and open an avowal of the Lord Jesus Christ as may be suitable in your present condition.

I believe that many Christian people get into a deal of trouble through not being honest in their convictions. For instance, if a man goes into a workshop, or a soldier into a barracks, and if he does not fly his flag from the first, it will be very difficult for him to run it up afterwards. But if he immediately and boldly lets them know, "I am a Christian and there are certain things that I cannot do to please you, and certain other things that I cannot help doing, though they displease you"—when that is clearly understood, after a while, the singularity of the thing will be gone and the man will be left alone. But if he is a little sneaky and thinks that he is going to please the world and please Christ, too, he is in for a rough time— let him depend upon it! His life will be that of a toad under a harrow, or a fox in a dog kennel if he tries the way of compromise. That will never do! Come out! Show your colors! Let it be known who you are and what you are—and although your course will not be smooth, it will certainly be not half as rough as if you tried to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds—a very difficult piece of business that!

This man came out, then and there, and made as open an avowal of his faith in Christ as was possible.

The next thing he did was to rebuke his fellow sinner. He spoke to him in answer to the ribaldry with which he had assailed our Lord. I do not know what the unconverted convict had been

blasphemously saying, but his converted comrade spoke very honestly to him. "Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing wrong." It is more than ever necessary in these days that believers in Christ should not allow sin to go unrebuked and yet a great many of them do so. Do you not know that a person who is silent when a wrong thing is said or done may become a participator in the sin? If you do not rebuke sin—I mean, of course, on all fit occasions and in a proper spirit—your silence will give consent to the sin and you will be an aider and abettor in it. A man who saw a robbery and who did not cry, "Stop, thief!" would be thought to be in league with the thief. And the man who can hear swearing, or see impurity and never utter a word of protest may well question whether he is right, himself. Our "other men's sins" make up a great item in our personal guilt unless we rebuke them. This our Lord expects us to do. The dying thief did it and did it with all his heart—and in doing so far exceeded large numbers of those who hold their heads high in the Church!

Next, the dying thief made a full confession of his guilt. He said to him who was hanged with him, "Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly." Not many words, but what a world of meaning was in them—"we, indeed, justly." "You and I are dying for our crimes," he said, "and we deserve to die." When a man is willing to confess that he deserves the wrath of God—that he deserves the suffering which his sin has brought upon him—there is evidence of sincerity in him. In this man's case, his repentance glittered like a holy tear in the eye of his faith, so that his faith was jeweled with the drops of his penitence. As I have often told you, I suspect the faith which is not born as a twin with repentance, but there is no room for suspicion in the case of this penitent confessor. I pray God that you and I may have such a thorough work as this in our own hearts as the result of our faith.

Then, see, this dying thief defends his Lord right manfully. He says, "We, indeed, justly, but this Man has done nothing wrong." Was not that beautifully said? He did not say, "This Man does not deserve to die," but, "This Man has done nothing wrong." He means that He is perfectly innocent! He does not even say, "He has done nothing wicked," but he even asserts that He has not acted unwisely or indiscreetly—"This Man has done nothing wrong." This is a glorious testimony of a dying man to One who was numbered with the transgressors and was being put to death because His enemies falsely accused Him. Beloved, I only pray that you and I may bear as good a witness to our Lord as this thief did! He outruns us all. We need not think much of the coming of his conversion late in life—we may far rather consider how blessed was the testimony which he bore for his Lord when it was most needed! When all other voices were silent, one suffering penitent spoke out and said—"This Man has done nothing wrong."

See, again, another mark of this man's faith. He prays and his prayer is directed to Jesus. "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." True faith is always praying faith. "Behold, he prays," is one of the most sure tests of the new birth. Oh, Friends, may we abound in prayer, for thus we shall prove that our faith in Jesus Christ is what it ought to be! This converted robber opened his mouth wide in prayer. He prayed with great confidence as to the coming Kingdom and he sought that Kingdom first, even to the exclusion of all else. He might have asked for life, or for ease from pain, but he prefers the Kingdom—and this is a high mark of Grace.

In addition to thus praying, you will see that he adores and worships Jesus, for he says, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." The petition is worded as if he felt, "Only let Christ think of me and it is enough. Let Him but remember me and the thought of His mind will be effectual for everything that I shall need in the world to come." This is to impute Godhead to Christ! If a man can cast his all upon the mere memory of a person, he must have a very high esteem of that person. If to be remembered by the Lord Jesus is all that this man asks, or desires, he pays to the Lord great honor. I think that there was about his prayer a worship equal to the eternal hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. There was in it a glorification of his Lord which is not excelled even by the endless symphonies of angelic spirits who surround the Throne of God! Thief, you have well done!

Oh, that some penitent spirit here might be helped thus to believe, thus to confess, thus to defend his Master, thus to adore, thus to worship—and then the age of the convert would be a matter of the smallest imaginable consequence!

IV. Now, the last remark is this—There was something very special about the dying thief as to OUR LORD'S WORDS TO HIM ABOUT THE WORLD TO COME. He said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." He only asked the Lord to remember him, but he obtained this surprising answer, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise."

In some respects I envy this dying thief, for this reason—that when the Lord pardoned me and pardoned the most of you who are present, He did not give us a place in Paradise that same day. We are not yet come to the rest which is promised to us. No, you are waiting here. Some of you have been waiting very long. It is 30 years with many of us. It is 40 years, it is 50 years with many others since the Lord blotted out your sins, and yet you are not with Him in Paradise. There is a dear member of this Church who, I suppose, has known the Lord for 75 years and she is still with us, having long passed the 90th year of her age. The Lord did not admit her to Paradise on the day of her conversion. He did not take any of us from Nature to Grace and from Grace to Glory, in a day. We have had to wait a good while. There is something for us to do in the wilderness and so we are kept out of the heavenly garden.

I remember that Mr. Baxter said that he was not in a hurry to be gone to Heaven and a friend called upon Dr. John Owen, who had been writing about the Glory of Christ, and asked him what he thought of going to Heaven. That great Divine replied, "I am longing to be there." "Why," said the other, "I have just spoken to holy Mr. Baxter and he says that he would prefer to be here, since he thinks that he can be more useful on earth." "Oh," said Dr. Owen, "my Brother Baxter is always full of practical godliness, but for all that I cannot say that I am at all desirous to linger in this mortal state. I would rather be gone." Each of these men, seems to me, to have been the half of Paul. Paul was made up of the two, for he was desirous to depart, but he was willing to remain because it was necessary for the people. We would put both together and, like Paul, have a strong desire to depart and to be with Christ, and yet be willing to wait if we can do service to our Lord and to His Church. Still, I think he has the best of it who is converted and enters Heaven the same night! This robber breakfasted with the devil, but he dined with Christ on earth and supped with Him in Paradise! This was short work, but blessed work! What a host of troubles he escaped! What a world of temptation he missed! What an evil world he left! He was just born, like a lamb dropped in the field, and then he was lifted into the Shepherd's bosom straight away!

I do not remember the Lord ever saying this to anybody else. I dare say it may have happened that souls have been converted and have gone Home at once, but I never heard of anybody that had such an assurance from Christ as this man had. "Verily, I say unto you"—such a personal assurance! "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Dying thief, you were favored above many, "to be with Christ, which is far better," and to be with Him so soon!

Why is it that our Lord does not thus imparadise all of us at once? It is because there is something for us to do on earth. My Brothers and Sisters, are you doing it? Are you doing it? Some good people are still on earth, but why? But why? What is the use of them? I cannot make it out. If they are, indeed, the Lord's people, what are they here for? They get up in the morning and eat their breakfast and, in due course eat their dinner, their supper and go to bed and sleep. At a proper hour they get up the next morning and do the same as on the previous day. Is this living for Jesus? Is this life? It does not come to much. Can this be the life of God in man?

Oh, Christian people, do justify your Lord in keeping you waiting here! How can you justify Him but by serving Him to the utmost of your power? The Lord help you to do so! Why, you owe as much to Him as the dying thief! I know I owe a great deal more. What a mercy it is to have been converted while you were yet a boy, to be brought to the Savior while you were yet a girl! What a debt of obligation young Christians owe to the Lord! And if this poor thief crammed a life full of testimony into a few minutes, ought not you and I, who are spared for years after conversion, to perform good service for our Lord?

Come, let us wake up if we have been asleep! Let us begin to live if we have been half dead. May the Spirit of God yet make something of us, so that we may go as industrious servants from the labors of the vineyard to the pleasures of Paradise! To our once crucified Lord be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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Luke 23,42-43 #2078 - The Believing Thief

THE BELIEVING THIEF

NO. 2078

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come

into Your kingdom. And Jesus said unto him,

Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise."

Luke 23:42-43.

SOME time ago I preached upon the whole story of the dying thief. I do not propose to do the same today but only to look at it from one particular point of view. The story of the salvation of the dying thief is a standing instance of the power of Christ to save and of His abundant willingness to receive all that come to Him in whatever plight they may be. I cannot regard this act of Divine Grace as a solitary instance any more than the salvation of Zaccheus, the restoration of Peter, or the call of Saul, the persecutor. Every conversion is, in a sense, singular—no two are exactly alike and yet any one conversion is a type of others.

The case of the dying thief is much more similar to our conversion than it is dissimilar. In point of fact his case may be regarded as typical rather than as an extraordinary incident. So I shall use it at this time. May the Holy Spirit speak through it to the encouragement of those who are ready to despair!

Remember, beloved Friends, that our Lord Jesus at the time He saved this malefactor was at His lowest. His Glory had been ebbing out in Gethsemane and before Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate. But it had now reached the utmost low water mark. Stripped of His garments and nailed to the Cross, our Lord was mocked by a ribald crowd and was dying in agony—then was He "numbered with the transgressors," and made as the offscouring of all things. Yet while in that condition He achieved this marvelous deed of Divine Grace. Behold the wonder worked by the Savior when emptied of all His Glory and a spectacle of shame upon the brink of death!

How certain is it that He can do great wonders of mercy now—seeing that He has returned unto His Glory and sits upon the Throne of light! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." If a dying Savior saved the thief, my argument is that He can do even more, now that He lives and reigns. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth—can anything at this present time surpass the power of His

Grace?

It is not only the weakness of our Lord which makes the salvation of the penitent thief memorable. It is the fact that the dying malefactor saw it before his very eyes. Can you put yourself into his place and suppose yourself to be looking upon one who hangs in agony upon a cross? Could you readily believe Him to be the Lord of Glory who would soon come to His kingdom? That was no mean faith which, at such a moment, could believe in Jesus as Lord and King. If the Apostle Paul were here and wanted to add a New Testament chapter to the eleventh of Hebrews, he might certainly commence his instances of remarkable faith with this thief.

He believed in a crucified, derided, and dying Christ and cried to Him as to one whose kingdom would surely come. The thief's faith was the more remarkable because he was, himself, in great pain and bound to die. It is not easy to exercise confidence when you are tortured with deadly anguish. Our own rest of mind has at times been greatly hindered by pain of body. When we are the subjects of acute suffering it is not easy to exhibit that faith which we fancy we possess at other times. This man, suffering as he did and seeing the Savior in so sad a state, nevertheless believed unto life eternal. Herein was such faith as is seldom seen.

Remember also, that he was surrounded by scoffers. It is easy to swim with the current and hard to go against the stream. This man heard the priests, in their pride, ridicule the Lord. The great multitude of the common people, with one consent, joined in the scorning—even his comrade caught the spirit of the hour and also mocked Jesus. And perhaps he did the same for a while. But through the Grace of God he was changed and believed in the Lord Jesus in the teeth of all the scorn. His faith was not affected by his surroundings.

But he, dying thief as he was, proclaimed his confidence. Like a jutting rock standing out in the midst of a torrent, he declared the innocence of the Christ whom others blasphemed. His faith is worthy of our imitation in its fruits. He had no member that was free except his tongue, and he used that member wisely to rebuke his brother malefactor—and defend his Lord. His faith brought forth a brave testimony and a bold confession.

I am not going to praise the thief or his faith—I am going to extol the glory of that Divine Grace which gave the thief such faith and then freely saved him by its means. I am anxious to show how glorious is the Savior—that Savior to the uttermost, who at such a time could save such a man and give him so great a faith and so perfectly and speedily prepare him for eternal bliss. Behold the power of that Divine Spirit who could produce such faith on soil so unlikely and in a climate so unfavorable.

Let us enter at once into the center of our sermon. Note first the man who was our Lord's last companion on earth. Note secondly that this same man was our Lord's first companion at the gate of Paradise. And then, thirdly, let us note the sermon which our Lord preaches to us from this act of Divine Grace. Oh, for a blessing from the Holy Spirit all the sermon through!

I. Carefully NOTE THAT THE CRUCIFIED THIEF WAS OUR LORD'S LAST COMPANION ON EARTH. What sorry company our Lord selected when He was here. He did not consort with the religious Pharisees or the philosophic Sadducees—He was known as "the friend of publicans and sinners." How I rejoice at this! It gives me assurance that He will not refuse to associate with me. When the Lord Jesus made a friend of me He certainly did not make a choice which brought Him

credit. Do you think He gained any honor when He made a friend of you? Has He ever gained anything by befriending us?

No, my Brethren. If Jesus had not stooped very low He would not have come to me. And if He did not seek the most unworthy He might not have come to you. You feel it so and you are thankful that He came "not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." As the great Physician, our Lord was much with the sick—He went where there was room for Him to exercise His healing art. The whole have no need of a Physician—they cannot appreciate Him—and therefore He did not frequent their abodes. But after all, our Lord did make a good choice when He saved you and me. For in us He has found abundant room for His mercy and Grace. There has been plenty of elbow room for His love to work within the awful emptiness of our necessities and sins. And therein He has done great things for us, and we are glad.

Lest any here should be despairing and say, "He will never look on me," I want you to notice that the last companion of Christ on earth was a sinner and no ordinary sinner. He had broken even the laws of man, for he was a robber. One calls him "a brigand," and I suppose it is likely to have been the case. The brigands of those days mixed murder with their robberies—he was probably a freebooter in arms against the Roman government—making this a pretext for plundering as he had opportunity. At last he was arrested and was condemned by a Roman tribunal, which, on the whole, was usually just, and in this case was certainly just.

He himself confessed the justice of his condemnation. The malefactor who believed upon the cross was a convict who had lain in the condemned cell and was then undergoing execution for his crimes. A convicted felon was the person with whom our Lord last consorted upon earth. What a lover of the souls of guilty men is Jesus! How He stoops to the very lowest of mankind! To this most unworthy of men the Lord of Glory, before He gave up His life, spoke with matchless grace! He spoke to him such wondrous words as never can be excelled if you search the Scriptures through—"Today shall you be with Me in Paradise"!

I do not suppose that anywhere in this Tabernacle there will be found a man who has been convicted before the Law or who is even chargeable with a crime against common honesty. But if there should be such a person among my hearers, I would invite him to find pardon and change of heart though our Lord Jesus Christ. You may come to Him whoever you may be. For this man did. Here is a specimen of one who had gone to the extremes of guilt and who acknowledged that he had done so. He made no excuse and sought no cloak for his sin. He was in the hands of justice, confronted with execution—and yet he believed in Jesus and breathed a humble prayer to Him—and he was saved upon the spot!

As is the sample, such is the bulk. Jesus saves others of like kind. Let me, therefore, put it very plainly here so that no one may misunderstand me—none of you are excluded from the infinite mercy of Christ! However great your iniquity—if you believe in Jesus, He will save you.

This man was not only a sinner, he was a sinner newly awakened. I do not suppose that he had seriously thought of the Lord Jesus before. According to the other Evangelists he appears to have joined with his fellow thief in scoffing at Jesus. If he did not actually himself use opprobrious words he was so far consenting that the Evangelist did him no injustice when he said, "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." But, now, suddenly, he wakes up to the

conviction that the Man who is dying at his side is something more than a man. He reads the title over His head and believes it to be true—"This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

Thus believing, he makes his appeal to the Messiah, whom he had so newly found, and commits himself to His hands. My Hearer, do you see this Truth of God—that the moment a man knows Jesus to be the Christ of God he may at once put his trust in Him and be saved? A certain preacher, whose Gospel was very doubtful, said, "Do you, who have been living in sin for fifty years believe that you can in a moment be made clean through the blood of Jesus?" I answer, "Yes, we do believe that in one moment, through the precious blood of Jesus, the blackest soul can be made white. We believe that in a single instant the sins of sixty or seventy years can be absolutely forgiven and that the old nature which has gone on growing worse and worse can receive its death wound and eternal life may be implanted in the soul at once."

It was so with this man. He had reached the end of his tether, but all of a sudden he woke up to the assured conviction that the Messiah was at his side—and believing—he looked to Him and lived. So now, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have never in your life before been the subject of any religious conviction—if you have lived up till now an utterly ungodly life— if now you will believe that God's dear Son has come into the world to save men from sin and will sincerely confess your sin and trust in Him—you shall be immediately saved. Yes, while I speak the word, the deed of Divine Grace may be accomplished by that glorious One who has gone up into Heaven with omnipotent power to save.

I desire to put this case very plainly—this man who was the last companion of Christ upon earth was a sinner in misery. His sins had found him out—he was now enduring the reward of his deeds. I constantly meet with persons in this condition—they have lived a life of wantonness, excess and carelessness and they begin to feel the fire-flakes of the tempest of wrath falling upon their flesh. They dwell in an earthly Hell—a prelude of eternal woe. Remorse, like an asp, has stung them and set their blood on fire—they cannot rest, they are troubled day and night. "Be sure your sin will find you out." It has found them out and arrested them and they feel the strong grip of conviction.

This man was in that horrible condition—what is more, he was in the absolutely extreme. He could not live long—the crucifixion was sure to be fatal. In a short time his legs would be broken to end his wretched existence. He, poor soul, had but a short time to live—only the space between noon and sundown. But it was long enough for the Savior, who is mighty to save. Some are very much afraid that people will put off coming to Christ if we state this. I cannot help what wicked men do with the Truth of God but I shall state it all the same. If you are now within an hour of death, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. If you never reach your homes again but drop dead on the road, if you will now believe in the Lord Jesus you shall be saved—saved now—on the spot.

Looking and trusting to Jesus, He will give you a new heart and a right spirit and blot out your sins. This is the glory of Christ's Grace. How I wish I could extol it in proper language! He was last seen on earth before His death in company with a convicted felon to whom He spoke most lovingly. Come, O you guilty and He will receive you graciously!

Once more, this thief whom Christ saved at last was a man who could do no good works. If salvation had been by good works he could not have been saved. For he was fastened hand and

foot to the tree of doom. It was all over with him as to any act or deed of righteousness. He could say a good word or two but that was all. He could perform no acts. And if his salvation had depended on an active life of usefulness, certainly he never could have been saved. He was also a sinner who could not exhibit a longenduring repentance for sin for he had so short a time to live. He could not have experienced bitter convictions lasting over months and years, for his time was measured by moments and he was on the borders of the grave.

His end was very near, and yet the Savior could save him and did save him so perfectly that the sun went not down till he was in Paradise with Christ! This sinner, whom I have painted to you in colors none too black, was one who believed in Jesus and confessed his faith. He did trust the Lord. Jesus was a man and he called Him so. But he knew that He was also Lord and he called Him so and said, "Lord, remember me." He had such confidence in Jesus that he knew if He would but only think of him, if Jesus would only remember him when He came into His kingdom, that would be all that he would ask of Him.

Alas, my dear Hearers! The trouble with some of you is that you know all about my Lord and yet you do not trust Him. Trust is the saving act. Years ago you were on the verge of really trusting Jesus but you are just as far off from it now as you were then. This man did not hesitate—he grasped the one hope for himself. He did not keep his persuasion of our Lord's Messiahship in his mind as a dry, dead belief. No, he turned it into trust and prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Oh, that in His infinite mercy many of you would trust my Lord this morning! You shall be saved, I am sure you shall—if you are not saved when you trust—I must myself also renounce all hope.

This is all that we have done—we looked and we lived and we continue to live because we look to the living Savior. Oh, that this morning, feeling your sin, you would look to Jesus, trust Him and confess that trust! Owning that He is Lord to the Glory of God the Father, you must and shall be saved! In consequence of having this faith which saved him, this poor man breathed the humble, but fitting prayer, "Lord, remember me." This does not seem too much to ask. But as he understood it, it meant all that an anxious heart could desire. As he thought of the kingdom he had such clear ideas of the glory of the Savior that he felt that if the Lord would think of him, his eternal state would be safe.

Joseph, in prison, asked the chief butler to remember him when he was restored to power. But he forgot him. Our Joseph never forgets a sinner who cried to Him in the low dungeon. In His kingdom He remembers the moans and groans of poor sinners who are burdened with a sense of sin. Can you not pray this morning and thus secure a place in the memory of the Lord Jesus?

Thus I have tried to describe the thief. And after having done my best I shall fail of my objective unless I make you see that whatever this thief was—he is a picture of what you are. Especially if you have been a great offender and if you have been living long without caring for eternal things! And yet you, even you, may do as that thief did. You may believe that Jesus is the Christ and commit your souls into His hands and He will save you as surely as He saved the condemned brigand. Jesus graciously says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." This means that if you come and trust Him, whoever you may be, He will for no reason and on no ground and under no circumstances ever cast you out. Do you catch that thought? Do you feel that it belongs to you and that if you come to Him you shall find eternal life? I rejoice if you so far perceive the Truth.

Few persons have so much contact with desponding and despairing souls as I have. Poor, cast down ones, write to me continually. I scarcely know why. I have no especial gift of consolation but I gladly lay myself out to comfort the distressed and they seem to know it. What joy I have when I see a despairing one find peace! I have had this joy several times during the week just ended. How much I desire that any of you who are breaking your hearts because you cannot find forgiveness, would come to my Lord and trust Him and enter into rest! Has He not said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"? Come and try Him and that rest shall be yours.

II. In the second place, NOTE THAT THIS MAN WAS OUR LORD'S COMPANION AT THE GATE OF PARADISE. I am not going into any speculations as to where our Lord went when He quit the Body which hung on the Cross. It would seem from some Scriptures that He descended into the lower parts of the earth—that He might fulfill all things. But He very rapidly traversed the regions of the dead. Remember that He died perhaps an hour or two before the thief and during that time the eternal glory flamed through the underworld and was flashing through the gates of Paradise just when the pardoned thief was entering the eternal world.

Who is this that enters the pearly gate at the same moment as the King of Glory? Who is this favored companion of the Redeemer? Is it some honored martyr? Is it a faithful Apostle? Is it a Patriarch like Abraham? Or a prince like David? It is none of these. Behold and be amazed at Sovereign Grace! He that goes in at the gate of Paradise with the King of Glory is a thief who was saved in the article of death. He is saved in no inferior way and received into bliss in no secondary style. Verily there are last which shall be first!

Here I would have you notice the condescension of our Lord's choice. The comrade of the Lord of Glory for whom the cherub turns aside his sword of fire is no great one, but a newly-converted malefactor. And why? I think the Savior took him with Him as a specimen of what He meant to do. He seemed to say to all the heavenly powers, "I bring a sinner with Me. He is a sample of the rest." Have you ever heard of him who dreamed that he stood without the gate of Heaven and while there he heard sweet music from a band of venerable persons who were on their way to G

Enquiring "What are these?" he was told that they were the goodly fellowship of the Prophets. He sighed and said, "Alas, I am not one of those." He waited a while and another band of shining ones drew near, who also entered Heaven with hallelujahs and when he enquired, "Who are these and from where they came?" the answer was, "These are the glorious company of the Apostles." Again he sighed and said, "I cannot enter with them." Then came another body of men, white-robed and bearing palms in their hands who marched amid great acclamation into the golden city. These he learned were the noble army of martyrs. And again he wept and said, "I cannot enter with these."

In the end he heard the voices of much people and saw a greater multitude advancing among whom he perceived Rahab and Mary Magdalene, David and Peter, Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus and he espied especially the thief who died at the right hand of Jesus. These all entered in a strange company. Then he eagerly enquired, "Who are these?" and they answered, "This is the host of sinners saved by Divine Grace." Then was he exceeding glad and said, "I can go in with these." But he thought there would be no shouting at the approach of this company and that they would enter Heaven without song. Instead of which, there seemed to rise a seven-fold hallelujah of praise unto the Lord of Love. For there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that

repent.

I invite any poor soul here that can neither aspire to serve Christ, nor to suffer for Him as yet, nevertheless to come in with other believing sinners—in the company of Jesus who now sets before us an open door. While we are handling this text, note well the blessedness of the place to which the Lord called this penitent. Jesus said, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Paradise means a garden—a garden filled with delights. The garden of Eden is the type of Heaven. We know that Paradise means Heaven, for the Apostle speaks of such a man caught up into Paradise and he calls it the third Heaven. Our Savior took this dying thief into the Paradise of infinite delight, and this is where He will take all of us sinners who believe in Him. If we are trusting Him, we shall ultimately be with Him in Paradise.

The next word is better still. Note the glory of the society to which this sinner is introduced—"Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." If the Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me," we should not need Him to add another word. Where He is, is Heaven to us. He added the word, "Paradise," because otherwise none could have guessed where He was going. Think of it, you uncomely soul. You are to dwell with the Altogether Lovely One forever! You poor and needy ones—you are to be with Him in His Glory, in His bliss, in His perfection. Where He is and as He is, you shall be. The Lord looks into those weeping eyes of yours this morning and He says, "Poor Sinner, you shall one day be with Me." I think I hear you say, "Lord, that is bliss too great for such a sinner as I am." But He replies—I have loved you with an everlasting love—therefore with loving kindness will I draw you, till you shall be with Me where I am.

The stress of the text lies in the speediness of all this. "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." "Today." You shall not lie in purgatory for ages, nor sleep in limbo for so many years. But you shall be ready for bliss at once and at once, you shall enjoy it. The sinner was hard by the gates of Hell but almighty mercy lifted him up and the Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." What a change from the Cross to the crown, from the anguish of Calvary to the glory of the New Jerusalem!

In those few hours the beggar was lifted from the dunghill and set among princes. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Can you measure the change from that sinner—loathsome in his iniquity when the sun was at high noon—to that same sinner clothed in pure white and accepted in the Beloved, in the Paradise of God, when the sun went down? O glorious Savior, what marvels You can work! How rapidly can You work them!

Please notice, also, the majesty of the Lord's Grace in this text. The Savior said to him, "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Our Lord gives His own will as the reason for saving this man. "I say." He says it, who claims the right thus to speak. It is He who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. He speaks royally, "Verily I say unto you." Are they not imperial words? The Lord is a King in whose Word there is power. What He says none can deny. He that has the keys of Hell and of death says, "I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Who shall prevent the fulfillment of His Word?

Notice the certainty of it. He says, "Verily." Our blessed Lord on the Cross returned to His old majestic manner as He painfully turned His head and looked on His convert. He was likely to begin

His preaching with," Verily, verily, I say unto you." And now that He is dying He uses His favorite manner and says, "Verily." Our Lord took no oath—His strongest asseveration was, "Verily, verily." To give the penitent the most plain assurance, He says, "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." In this the thief had an absolutely indisputable assurance that though he must die, yet he would live and find himself in Paradise with his Lord.

I have thus shown you that our Lord passed within the pearly gate in company with one to whom He had pledged Himself. Why should not you and I pass through that pearly gate in due time, clothed in His merit, washed in His blood and resting on His power? One of these days angels will say of you and of me, "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" The shining ones will be amazed to see some of us coming. If you have lived a life of sin until now, and yet shall repent and enter Heaven—what an amazement there will be in every golden street to think that you have come there! In the early Christian Church, Marcus Caius Victorinus was converted. But he had reached so great an age and had been so gross a sinner that the pastor and Church doubted him.

He gave, however, clear proof of having undergone the Divine change, and then there were great acclamations and many shouts of, "Victorinus has become a Christian!" Oh, that some of you big sinners might be saved! How gladly would we rejoice over you! Why not? Would it not glorify God? The salvation of this convicted highwayman has made our Lord illustrious for mercy even unto this day—would not your case do the same? Would not saints cry, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" if they heard that some of you had been turned from darkness to marvelous light? Why should it not be? Believe in Jesus and it is so.

III. Now I come to my third and most practical point—NOTE THE LORD'S SERMON TO US FROM ALL THIS.

The devil wants to preach this morning a bit. Yes, Satan asks to come to the front and preach to you. But he cannot be allowed. Out of here, you deceiver! Yet I should not wonder if he gets at some of you when the sermon is over and whispers, "You see, you can be saved at the very last. Put off repentance and faith. You may be forgiven on your deathbed." Sirs, you know who it is that would ruin you by this suggestion. Abhor his deceitful teaching! Do not be ungrateful because God is kind. Do not provoke the Lord because He is patient.

Such conduct would be unworthy and ungrateful. Do not run an awful risk because one escaped the tremendous peril. The Lord will accept all who repent. But how do you know that you will repent? It is true that one thief was saved—but the other thief was lost. One is saved and we may not despair. The other is lost and we may not presume. Dear Friends, I trust you are not made of such diabolical stuff as to fetch from the mercy of God an argument for continuing in sin. If you do, I can only say of you, that your damnation will be just. You will have brought it upon yourselves.

Consider now the teaching of our Lord—see the glory of Christ in salvation. He is ready to save at the last moment. He was just passing away— His foot was on the doorstep of the Father's house. Up comes this poor sinner, the last thing at night—at the eleventh hour—and the Savior smiles and declares that He Himself will not enter except with this belated wanderer. At the very gate He declares that this seeking soul shall enter with Him. There was plenty of time for him to have come before—you know how apt we are to say, "You have waited to the last moment. I am just going off,

and I cannot attend to you now." Our Lord had His dying pangs upon Him and yet He attends to the perishing criminal and permits him to pass through the heavenly portal in His company.

Jesus easily saves the sinners for whom He painfully died. Jesus loves to rescue sinners from going down into the pit. You will be very happy if you are saved but you will not be one half so happy as He will be when He saves you. See how gentle He is—

"His hand no thunder bears, No terror clothes His brow; No bolts to drive our guilty souls To fiercer flames below."

He comes to us full of tenderness with tears in His eyes, mercy in His hands and love in His heart. Believe Him to be a great Savior of great sinners. I have heard of one who had received great mercy who went about saying, "He is a great forgiver." And I would have you say the same. You shall find your transgressions put away and your sins pardoned once and for all if you trust Him now.

The next doctrine Christ preaches from this wonderful story is faith in its permitted attachment. This man believed that Jesus was the Christ. The next thing he did was to appropriate that Christ. He said, "Lord, remember me." Jesus might have said, "What have I to do with you and what have you to do with Me? What has a thief to do with the perfect One?" Many of you good people try to get as far away as you can from the erring and fallen. They might infect your innocence! Society claims that we should not be familiar with people who have offended against its laws. We must not be seen associating with them, for it might discredit us. Infamous bosh!

Can anything discredit sinners such as we are by nature and by practice? If we know ourselves before God, are we not degraded enough in and of ourselves? Is there anybody, after all, who is worse than we are when we see ourselves in the faithful glass of the Word? As soon as ever a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, let him hook himself on to Him. The moment you believe Jesus to be the Savior, seize upon Him as your Savior. If I remember rightly, Augustine called this man, "Latro laudabilis et mirabilis," a thief to be praised and wondered at—who dared, as it were—to seize the Savior for his own.

In this he is to be imitated. Take the Lord to be yours and you have Him. Jesus is the common property of all sinners who are bold enough to take Him. Every sinner who has the will to do so may take the Lord home with Him. He came into the world to save the sinful. Take Him by force as robbers take their prey. The kingdom of Heaven suffers the violence of daring faith. Get Him and He will never get Himself away from you. If you trust Him, He must save you.

Next, notice the doctrine of faith in its immediate power—

"The moment a sinner believes, And trusts in his crucified God, His pardon at once he receives, Redemption in full through His blood." "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." He has no sooner believed than Christ gives him the seal of his believing in the full assurance that he shall be with Him forever in His Glory. O dear Hearts, if you believe this morning, you shall be saved this morning! God grant that you, by His rich Grace, may be brought into salvation here on the spot and at once!

The next thing is the nearness of eternal things. Think of that a minute. Heaven and Hell are not places far away. You may be in Heaven before the clock ticks again. Could we but rend that veil

which parts us from the unseen! It is all there and all near. "Today," said the Lord. Within three or four hours at the longest, "shall you be with Me in Paradise." It is so near! A statesman has given us the expression of being "within measurable distance." We are all within measurable distance of Heaven or Hell. If there is any difficulty in measuring the distance, it lies in its brevity rather than in its length—

One gentle sigh the fetter breaks, We scarce can say, 'He's gone,' Before the ransomed spirit takes Its mansion near the Throne."

Oh, that we, instead of trifling about such things because they seem so far away, would solemnly realize them—since they are really so very near! This very day, before the sun goes down, some Hearer now sitting in this place may see in his own spirit the realities of Heaven or Hell. It has frequently happened in this large congregation—someone in our audience has died before the next Sabbath has come round—it may happen this week. Think of that, and let eternal things impress you all the more because they lie so near.

Furthermore, know that if you have believed in Jesus you are prepared for Heaven. It may be that you will have to live on earth twenty, or thirty, or forty years to glorify Christ. And if so, be thankful for the privilege. But if you do not live another hour, your instantaneous death would not alter the fact that he that believes in the Son of God is meet for Heaven. Surely, if anything beyond faith is needed to make us fit to enter Paradise, the thief would have been kept a little longer here. But no, he is in the morning in the state of nature—at noon he enters the state of Divine Grace— and by sunset he is in the state of Glory!

The question never is, whether a deathbed repentance is accepted if it is sincere—the question is—is it sincere? If it is—if the man dies five minutes after his first act of faith—he is as safe as if he had served the Lord for fifty years. If your faith is true, if you die one moment after you have believed in Christ you will be admitted into Paradise—even if you shall have enjoyed no time in which to produce good works and other evidences of Divine Grace. He that reads the heart will read your faith written on its fleshy tablets and He will accept you through Jesus Christ—even though no act of Divine Grace has been visible to the eye of man.

I conclude by again saying that this is not an exceptional case. I began with that and I want to finish with it. So many demi-semi-gospelers are so terribly afraid of preaching Free Grace too fully. I read somewhere and I think it is true, that some ministers preach the Gospel in the same way as donkeys eat thistles—namely, very, very cautiously. On the contrary, I will preach it boldly. I have not the slightest alarm about the matter. If any of you misuse Free Grace teaching, I cannot help it. He that will be damned can as well ruin himself by perverting the Gospel as by anything else. I cannot help what base hearts may invent.

But mine it is to set forth the Gospel in all its fullness of grace and I will do it. If the thief was an exceptional case—and our Lord does not usually act in such a way—there would have been a hint given of so important a fact. A hedge would have been set about this exception to all rules. Would not the Savior have whispered quietly to the dying man, "You are the only one I am going to treat in this way"? Whenever I have to do an exceptional favor to a person I have to say, "Do not mention this, or I shall have so many besieging me."

If the Savior had meant this to be a solitary case, He would have faintly said to him, "Do not let anybody know. But you shall today be in the kingdom with Me." No! Our Lord spoke openly and those about Him heard what He said. Moreover, the inspired penman has recorded it. If it had been an exceptional case it would not have been written in the Word of God. Men will not publish their actions in the newspapers if they feel that the record might lead others to expect from them what they cannot give. The Savior had this wonder of Divine Grace reported in the daily news of the Gospel because He means to repeat the marvel every day.

The bulk shall be equal to the sample, and therefore He sets the sample before you all. He is able to save to the uttermost—for He saved the dying thief. The case would not have been put there to encourage hopes which He cannot fulfill. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning and not for our disappointing. I pray you, therefore, if any of you have not yet trusted in my Lord Jesus come and trust in Him now. Trust Him wholly. Trust Him only. Trust Him at once. Then will you sing with me—

"The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day, And there have I, though vile as he, Washed all my sins away."

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

Luke 23,46 #2311 - Our Lord's Last Cry from the Cr

OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS

NO. 2311

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 4, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITATN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 9, 1889.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands

I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost."

Luke 23:46.

THESE were the dying words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." It may be instructive if I remind you that the Words of Christ upon the Cross were seven. Calling each of His cries, or utterances, by the title of a Word, we speak of the seven last Words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me rehearse them in your hearing. The first, when they nailed Him to the Cross, was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke has preserved that Word. Later, when one of the two thieves said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom," Jesus said to him, "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." This, also, Luke has carefully preserved. Farther on, our Lord, in His great agony, saw His mother, with breaking heart, standing by the Cross and looking up to Him with unutterable love and grief, and He said to her, "Woman, behold. your son!" and to the beloved Apostle, "Behold your mother!" and thus He provided a home for her when He, Himself, should be gone away. This utterance has only been preserved by John.

The fourth and central Word of the seven was, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama, Sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was the culmination of His grief, the central point of all His agony. That most awful word that ever fell from the lips of man, expressing the quintessence of exceeding agony, is well put fourth, as though it had need of three words before it, and three words after it, as its bodyguard. It tells of a good Man, a son of God, the Son of God, forsaken of His God! That central Word of the seven is found in Matthew and in Mark, but not in Luke or John.

But the fifth Word has been preserved by John, that is, "I thirst," the shortest, but not quite the sharpest of all the Master's Words, though under a bodily aspect, perhaps the sharpest of them all. John has also treasured up another very precious saying of Jesus Christ on the Cross, that is the wondrous Word, "It is finished." This was the last word but one, "It is finished," the gathering up of all His lifework, for He had loft nothing undone, no thread was left raveling, the whole fabric of

Volume 39 1tion had been woven, like His garment, from the top throughout, and it was finished to perfection! After He had said, "It is finished," He uttered the last Word of all, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," which I have taken for a text, tonight, but to which I will not come immediately.

There has been a great deal said about these seven cries from the Cross by many writers and though I have read what many of them have written, I cannot add anything to what they have said, since they have delighted to dwell upon these seven last cries, and here the most ancient writers, of what would be called the Romish school, are not to be excelled, even by Protestants, in their intense devotion to every letter of our Savior's dying Words. And they sometimes strike out new meanings, richer and more rare than any that have occurred to the far cooler minds of modern critics, who are, as a rule, greatly blessed with moles' eyes, able to see where there is nothing to be seen, but never able to see when there is anything worth seeing! Modern criticism, like modern theology, if it were put in the Garden of Eden, would not see a flower. It is like the sirocco that blasts and burns. It is without either dew or unction, in fact, it is the very opposite of these precious things, and proves itself to be unblessed of God and unblessed to men.

Now concerning these seven cries from the Cross, many authors have drawn from them, lessons concerning seven duties. Listen. When our Lord said, "Father, forgive them," in effect, He said to us, "Forgive your enemies." Even when they despitefully use you and put you to terrible pain, be ready to pardon them! Be like the sandalwood tree which perfumes the axe that fells it. Be all gentleness, kindness and love—and be this your prayer, "Father, forgive them."

The next duty is taken from the second cry, namely, that of penitence and faith in Christ, for He said to the dying thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Have you, like he, confessed your sin? Have you his faith and his prayerfulness? Then you shall be accepted even as he was! Learn, then, from the second cry, the duty of penitence and faith.

When our Lord, in the third cry, said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" He taught us the duty of filial love. No Christian must ever be short of love to his mother, his father, or to any of those who are endeared to him by relationships which God has appointed for us to observe. Oh, by the dying love of Christ to His mother, let no man here unman himself by forgetting his mother! She bore you—bear her in her old age and lovingly cherish her even to the last.

Jesus Christ's fourth cry teaches us the duty of clinging to God and trusting in God—"My God, my God." See how, with both hands, He takes hold of Him—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He cannot bear to be left of God. All else causes Him but little pain compared with the anguish of being forsaken of His God. So learn to cling to God, to grip Him with a double-handed faith, and if you do ever think that He has forsaken you, cry after Him, and say, "Show me why You contend with me, for I cannot bear to be without You." The fifth cry, "I thirst," teaches us to set a high value upon the fulfillment of God's Word. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst." Take good heed, in all your grief and weakness, to still preserve the Word of your God, and to obey the precept. Learn the doctrine and delight in the promise. As your Lord, in His great anguish said, "I thirst," because it was written that so He would speak, have regard unto the Word of the Lord even

in little things!

That sixth cry, "It is finished," teaches us perfect obedience. Go through with your keeping of God's Commandments. Leave out no Command, keep on obeying till you can say, "It is finished." Work your lifework, obey your Master, suffer or serve according to His will, but rest not till you can say with your Lord, "It is finished." "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

And that last Word, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," teaches us resignation. Yield all things. Yield up even your spirit to God at His bidding. Stand still and make a full surrender to the Lord, and let this be your watchword from the first even to the last, "Into Your hands, my Father, I commend my spirit." I think that this study of Christ's last Words should interest you, therefore let me linger a little longer upon it. Those seven cries from the Cross also teach us something about the attributes and offices of our Master. They are seven windows of agate and gates of carbuncle through which you may see Him and approach Him.

First, would you see Him as Intercessor? Then He cries, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Would you look at Him as King? Then hear His second Word, "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Would you mark Him as a tender Guardian? Hear Him say to Mary, "Woman, behold your son!" And to John, "Behold your mother!" Would you peer into the dark abyss of the agonies of His soul? Hear Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Would you understand the reality and the intensity of His bodily sufferings? Then hear Him say, "I thirst," for there is something exquisite in the torture of thirst when brought on by the fever of bleeding wounds. Men on the battlefield who have lost much blood, are devoured with thirst, and tell you that it is the worst pang of all. "I thirst," says Jesus. See the Sufferer in the body and understand how He can sympathize with you who suffer, since He suffered so much on the Cross. Would you see Him as the Finisher of your salvation? Then hear His cry, "Consummatum est"—"It is finished." Oh, glorious note! Here you see the blessed Finisher of your faith! And would you then take one more gaze and understand how voluntary was His suffering? Then hear Him say, not as one who is robbed of life, but as one who takes His soul and hands it over to the keeping of another, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Is there not much to be learned from these cries from the Cross? Surely these seven notes make a wondrous scale of music if we do but know how to listen to them! Let me run up the scale, again. Here, first, you have Christ's fellowship with men—"Father, forgive them." He stands side by side with sinners and tries to make an apology for them—"They know not what they do." Here is, next, His kingly power. He sets open Heaven's gate to the dying thief and bids him enter. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Thirdly, behold His human relationship. How near of kin He is to us! "Woman, behold your son!" Remember how He says, "Whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He belongs to the Human family. He is more of a Man than any man! As surely as He is very God of very God, He is also very Man of very man, taking into Himself the Nature, not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile, too. Belonging to His own nationality, but rising above all, He is the Man of men, the Son of Man.

See, next, His taking our sin. You say, "Which note is that" Well, they are all to that effect, but this one, chiefly, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It was because He bore our sins in His own body on the tree that He was forsaken of God. "He has made Him to be sin for us. who

knew no sin," and hence the bitter cry, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?" Behold Him, in that fifth cry, "I thirst," taking not only our sin, but also our infirmity—and all the suffering of our bodily nature. Then, if you would see His fullness as well as His weakness, if you would see His AllSufficiency as well as His sorrow, hear Him cry, "It is finished." What a wonderful fullness there is in that note! Redemption is all accomplished! It is all complete! It is all perfect! There is nothing left, not a drop of bitterness in the cup of gall—Jesus has drained it dry! There is not a farthing to be added to the ransom price—Jesus has paid it all! Behold His fullness in the cry, "It is finished." And then, if you would see how He has reconciled us to Himself, behold Him, the Man who was made a curse for us, returning with a blessing to His Father and taking us with Him, as He draws us all up by that last dear word, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."—

"Now both the Surety and sinner are free."

Christ goes back to the Father, for, "It is finished," and you and I come to the Father through His perfect work!

I have only practiced two or three tunes that can be played upon this harp, but it is a wonderful instrument. If it is not a harp of ten strings, it is, at any rate, an instrument of seven strings, and neither time nor eternity shall ever be able to fetch all the music out of them! Those seven dying words of the ever-living Christ will make melody for us in Glory through all the ages of eternity.

I shall now ask your attention for a little time to the text itself—"Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Do you see our Lord? He is dying and, as yet, His face is toward man. His last Word to man is the cry, "It is finished." Hear, all you sons of men, He speaks to you, "It is finished." Could you have a choicer Word with which He should say, "Adieu," to you in the hour of death? He tells you not to fear that His work is imperfect, not to tremble lest it should prove insufficient. He speaks to you and declares with His dying utterance, "It is finished." Now He has done with you and He turns His face the other way. His day's work is done, His more than Herculean toil is accomplished, and the great Champion is going back to His Father's Throne—and He speaks—but not to you. His last Word is addressed to His Father, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." These are His first Words in going Home to His Father, as, "It is finished," is His last Word as, for a while, He quits our company. Think of these words and may they be your first words, too, when you return to your Father! May you speak thus to your Divine Father in the hour of death!

The words were much hackneyed in Romish times, but they are not spoilt even for that. They used to be said in the Latin by dying men, "In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum." Every dying man used to try to say those words in Latin and if he did not, somebody tried to say them for him. They were made into a kind of spell of witchcraft—and so they lost that sweetness to our ears in the Latin—but in the English they shall always stand as the very essence of music for a dying saint, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

It is very noteworthy that the last Words that our Lord used were quoted from the Scriptures. This sentence is taken, as I daresay most of you know, from the 31st Psalm, and the fifth verse. Let me read it to you. What a proof it is of how full Christ was of the Bible! He was not one of those who think little of the Word of God. He was saturated with it. He was as full of Scripture as the fleece of Gideon was full of dew. He could not speak, even in His death, without uttering Scripture. This is

how David put it, "Into your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." Now, Beloved, the Savior altered this passage, or else it would not quite have suited Him. Do you see, first, He was obliged, in order to fit it to His own case, to add something to it? What did He add to it? Why, that word, "Father"! David said, "Into Your hand I commit my spirit," but Jesus said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Blessed advance! He knew more than David did, for He was more the Son of God than David could be. He was the Son of God in a very high and special sense by eternal filiation and so He begins the prayer with, "Father."

But then He takes something away from it. It was necessary that He should do so, for David said, "Into Your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me." Our blessed Master was not redeemed, for He was the Redeemer, and He could have said, "Into Your hand I commit My spirit, for I have redeemed My people." But that He did not choose to say. He simply took that part which suited Himself and used it as His own, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, you will not do better, after all, than to quote Scripture, especially in prayer! There are no prayers so good as those that are full of the Word of God! May all our speech be flavored with texts! I wish that it were more so. They laughed at our Puritan forefathers because the very names of their children were fetched out of passages of Scripture, but I, for my part, had much rather be laughed at for talking much of Scripture than for talking much of trashy novels—novels with which (I am ashamed to say it) many a sermon nowadays is larded, yes, larded with novels that are not fit for decent men to read and which are coated over till one hardly knows whether he is hearing about a historical event, or only a piece of fiction— from which abomination, good Lord, deliver us!

So, then, you see how well the Savior used Scripture, and how, from His first battle with the devil in the wilderness till His last struggle with death on the Cross, His weapon was always, "It is written." FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Now, I am coming to the text, itself, and I am going to preach from it for only a very short time. In doing so, firstly, let us learn the doctrine of this last cry from the Cross. Secondly, let us practice the duty. And thirdly, let us enjoy the privilege.

I. First, LET US LEARN THE DOCTRINE of our Lord's last cry from the Cross.

What is the Doctrine of this last Word of our Lord Jesus Christ? God is His Father and God is our Father. He who, Himself, said, "Father," did not say for Himself, "Our Father," for the Father is Christ's Father in a higher sense than He is ours. But yet He is not more truly the Father of Christ than He is our Father if we have believed in Jesus! "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Believe the Doctrine of the Fatherhood of God to His people! As I have warned you before, abhor the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, for it is a lie and a deep deception! It stabs at the heart, first, of the Doctrine of the Adoption which is taught in Scripture, for how can God adopt men if they are already all His children? In the second place, it stabs at the heart of the Doctrine of Regeneration, which is certainly taught in the Word of God. Now it is by regeneration and faith that we become the children of God, but how can that be if we are already the children of God? "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How can God give to men the power to become His sons

if they have it already? Believe not that lie of the devil, but believe this Truth of God, that Christ and all who are, by living faith in Christ, may rejoice in the Fatherhood of God!

Next learn this Doctrine, that in this fact lies our chief comfort. In our hour of trouble, in our time of warfare, let us say, "Father." You notice that the first cry from the Cross is like the last—the highest note is like the lowest. Jesus begins with, "Father, forgive them," and He finishes with, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." To help you in a stern duty like forgiveness, cry, "Father." To help you in sore suffering and death, cry, "Father." Your main strength lies in your truly being a child of God!

Learn the next Doctrine, that dying is going Home to our Father. I said to an old friend, not long ago, "Old Mr. So-and-so has gone Home." I meant that He was dead. He said, "Yes, where else would he go?" I thought that was a wise question. Where else would we go? When we grow gray, and our day's work is done, where should we go but home? So, when Christ has said, "It is finished," His next Word, of course, is, "Father." He has finished His earthly course and now He will go Home to Heaven. Just as a child runs to its mother's bosom when it is tired and wants to fall asleep, so Christ says, "Father," before He falls asleep in death.

Learn another Doctrine, that if God is our Father, and we regard ourselves as going Home when we die, because we go to Him, then He will receive us. There is no hint that we can commit our spirit to God and yet that God will not have us. Remember how Stephen, beneath a shower of stones, cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"? Let us, however we may die, make this our last emotion if not our last expression, "Father, receive my spirit." Shall not our heavenly Father receive His children? If you, being evil, receive your children at nightfall, when they come home to sleep, shall not your Father, who is in Heaven, receive you when your day's work is done? That is the doctrine we are to learn from this last cry from the Cross—the Fatherhood of God and all that comes of it to Believers.

II. Secondly, LET US PRACTICE THE DUTY. That duty seems to me to be, first, resignation. Whenever anything dis

tresses and alarms you, resign yourself to God. Say, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." Sing, with Faber—

"I bow me to Your will, O God, And all Your ways adore. And every day I live I'll seek To please You more and more."

Learn, next, the duty of prayer. When you are in the very anguish of pain. When you are surrounded by bitter griefs of mind as well as of body, still pray. Drop not the, "Our Father." Let not your cries be addressed to the air. Let not your moans be to your physician, or your nurse, but cry, "Father." Does not a child so cry when it has lost its way? If it is in the dark at night, and it starts up in a lone room, does it not cry out, "Father!" And is not a father's heart touched by that cry? Is there anybody here who has never cried to God? Is there one here who has never said, "Father"? Then, my Father, put Your love into their hearts and make them say, tonight, "I will arise and go to my Father." You shall truly be known to be the sons of God if that cry is in your heart and on your lips.

The next duty is the committal of ourselves to God by faith. Give yourselves up to God. Trust yourselves with God. Every morning, when you get up, take yourself and put yourself into God's custody—lock yourself up, as it were, in the box of Divine Protection—and every night, when you have unlocked the box, before you fall asleep, lock it again and give the key into the hand of Him who is able to keep you when the image of death is on your face. Before you sleep, commit yourself to God. I mean, do that when there is nothing to frighten you, when everything is going smoothly, when the wind blows softly from the south and the boat is speeding towards its desired haven—still make not yourself quiet with your own quieting! He who carves for himself will cut his fingers and get an empty plate. He who leaves God to carve for him shall often have fat things full of marrow placed before him. If you can trust, God will reward your trusting in a way that you know not as yet.

And then practice one other duty, that of the personal and continual realization of God's Presence. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." "You are here; I know that You are. I realize that You are here in the time of sorrow, and of danger; and I put myself into Your hands. Just as I would give myself to the protection of a policeman, or a soldier, if anyone attacked me, so do I commit myself to You, You unseen Guardian of the night, You unwearied Keeper of the day! You shall cover my head in the day of battle. Beneath Your wings will I trust, as a chick hides beneath the hen."

See, then, your duty. It is to resign yourself to God, pray to God, commit yourself to God and rest in a sense of the Presence of God. May the Spirit of God help you in the practice of such priceless duties as these!

III. Now, lastly, LET US ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE. First, let us enjoy the high privilege of resting in God in all times of dan

ger and pain. The doctor has just told you that you will have to undergo an operation. Say, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." There is every probability that that weakness of yours, or that disease of yours, will increase upon you and that, by-and-by, you will have to take to your bed and lie there, perhaps, for many a day. Then say, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." Do not fret, for that will not help you. Do not fear the future, for that will not aid you. Give yourself up (it is your privilege to do so) to the keeping of those dear hands that were pierced for you, to the love of that dear heart which was set abroach with the spear to purchase your redemption!

It is wonderful what rest of spirit God can give to a man or a woman in the very worst condition. Oh, how some of the martyrs have sung at the stake! How they have rejoiced when on the rack! Bonner's coal-hole, across the water there, at Fulham, where he shut up the martyrs, was a wretched place to lie on a cold winter's night, but they said, "They did rouse them in the straw, as they lay in the coal-hole, with the sweetest singing out of Heaven! And when Donner said, 'Fie on them that they should make such a noise!' they told him that he, too, would make such a noise if he was as happy as they were." When you have commended your spirit to God, then you have sweet rest in time of danger and pain!

The next privilege is that of a brave confidence, in the time of death, or in the fear of death. I was led to think over this text by using it a great many times last Thursday night. Perhaps none of you will ever forget last Thursday night. I do not think that I ever shall, if I live to be as old as

Methuselah. From this place till I reached my home, it seemed one continued sheet of fire—and the further I went, the more vivid became the lightning flashes. But when I came, at last, to turn up Leigham Court Road, then the lightning seemed to come in very bars from the sky and, at last, as I reached the top of the hill, and a crash came of the most startling kind, down poured a torrent of hail—hailstones that I will not attempt to describe, for you might think that I exaggerated! And then I felt, and my friend with me, that we could hardly expect to reach home alive. We were there at the very center and summit of the storm. All around us, on every side, and all within us, as it were, seemed nothing but the electric fluid— and God's right arm seemed bared for war. I felt then, "Well, now, I am very likely going Home," and I commended my spirit to God. And from that moment, though I cannot say that I took much pleasure in the peals of thunder, and the flashes of lightning, yet I felt quite as calm as I do here at this present moment—perhaps a little more calm than I do in the presence of so many people—happy at the thought that, within a single moment, I might understand more than all I could ever learn on earth and see in an instant more than I could hope to see if I lived here for a century! I could only say to my friend, "Let us commit ourselves to God. We know that we are doing our duty in going on as we are going, and all is well with us."

So we could only rejoice together in the prospect of being soon with God. We were not taken Home in the chariot of fire—we are still spared a little longer to go on with life's work—but I realize the sweetness of being able to have done with it all, to have no wish, no will, no word, scarcely a prayer, but just to take one's heart up and hand it over to the great Keeper, saying, "Father, take care of me. So let me live, so let me die. I have, henceforth, no desire about anything! Let it be as You please. Into Your hands I commend my spirit."

This privilege is not only that of having rest in danger, and confidence in the prospect of death—it is also full of consummate joy. Beloved, if we know how to commit ourselves into the hands of God, what a place it is for us to be in! What a place to be in—in the hands of God! There are the myriads of stars. There is the universe, itself! God's hand upholds its everlasting pillars and they do not fall. If we got into the hands of God, we get where all things rest and we get home and happiness! We have got out of the nothingness of the creature into the All-Sufficiency of the Creator. Oh, get you there! Hasten to get there, beloved Friends, and live, henceforth, in the hands of God!

"It is finished." You have not finished, but Christ has. It is all done. What you have to do will only be to work out what He has already finished for you, and show it to the sons of men in your lives. And because it is all finished, therefore say, "Now, Father, I return to You. My life, henceforth, shall be to be in You. My joy shall be to shrink to nothing in the Presence of the All-in-All, to die into the eternal life, to sink my ego into Jehovah, to let my manhood, my creature hood live only for its Creator and manifest only the Creator's Glory!

O Beloved, begin tomorrow morning and end tonight with, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." The Lord be with you all! Oh, if you have never prayed, God help you to begin to pray now, for Jesus' sake! Amen. EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

Luke 23:27-49, Matthew 27:50-54.

Luke 23:27. And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. Their best Friend, the Healer of their sick, the Lover of their children,

was about to be put to death, so they might well bewail and lament.

28-30. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. Our Savior spoke of the terrible siege of Jerusalem, the most tragic of all human transactions. I think I do not exaggerate when I say that history contains nothing equal to it. It stands alone in the unutterable agony of men, women and children in that dreadful time of suffering.

31. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If the Christ of God is put to death even while the Jewish capital seems vigorous and flourishing, what shall be done when it is all dry and dead, and the Roman legions are round about the doomed city?

32. And there were also two other malefactors, led with Him to be put to death. Every item of scorn was added to our Savior's death and yet the Scriptures were thus literally fulfilled, for, "He was numbered with the transgressors."

33, 34. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. Do you bear the hammer fall? "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Do you see the bleeding hands and feet of Jesus? This is all that is extracted by that fearful pressure—nothing but words of pardoning love, a prayer for those who are killing Him—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

35. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is Christ, the chosen of God. You know how mockery puts salt and vinegar into a wound. A man does not at any time like to be reviled, but when he is full of physical and mental anguish and his heart is heavy within him, then ridicule is peculiarly full of acid to him.

36, 37. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself. These rough soldiers knew how to put their jests in the most cruel shape and to press home their scoffs upon their suffering Victim.

38. And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew. These were the three languages that could be understood by all the people round about. 38. THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And so He is, and so He shall be. He has never quit the throne. The Son of David is still King of the Jews, though they continue to reject Him. But the day shall come when they shall recognize and receive the Messiah. "Then shall they look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for His only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for His first-born."

39. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If you are Christ, save Yourself and us. Matthew and Mark speak of both the thieves as railing at Jesus. We must take their expressions as being literally correct and, if so, both the malefactors at first cast reproaches in Christ's teeth.

40, 41. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss. Not only has He done nothing worthy of death, but He has done nothing improper, nothing out of place. "This man has done nothing amiss." The thief bears testimony to the perfect Character of this wondrous Man, whom he, nevertheless, recognized to be Divine, as we shall see in the next verse.

42-47. And He said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, He glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man. He was set there at the head of the guard, to watch the execution, and he could not help saying, as he observed the wonderful signs in Heaven and earth, "Certainly this was a righteous Man."

48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. What a change must have come over that ribald crowd! They had shouted, "Crucify Him!" They had stood there and mocked Him and now they are overcome with the sight, and they strike their breasts. Ah, dear Friends, their grief did not come to much! Men may strike their breasts, but unless God smites their hearts, all the outward signs of a gracious work will come to nothing at all.

49. And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things. Let "these things" be before your mind's eye this evening and think much of your crucified Lord, all you who are of His acquaintance, and who are numbered among His followers.

(As the Exposition is shorter than usual, an appropriate extract is added from Mr. Spurgeon's Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew). Matthew 27:50. Jesus, when He had cried again with a load voice, yielded up the ghost. Christ's strength was not exhausted. His last Word was uttered with a loud voice, like the shout of a conquering warrior! And what a Word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence, but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted within it? It is a kind of infinite expression for breadth, depth, length and height altogether immeasurable! Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed, He yielded up the ghost, willingly dying, laying down His life as He said He would—"I lay down My life for My sheep. I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

51-53. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Christ's death was the end of Judaism! The veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the Temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime! The body of Christ being rent, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to bottom. Now was there an

entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning Sacrifice.

See what marvels accompanied and followed the death of Christ! The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened. Thus did the material world pay homage to Him whom man had rejected, while Nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth, only, but also Heaven! These first miracles worked in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued till He comes again—rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchers of lust and evil, are quickened and come out from among the dead, and go unto the holy city, the New Jerusalem!

54. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. These Roman soldiers had never witnessed such scenes in connection with an execution, before, and they could only come to one conclusion about the illustrious Prisoner whom they had put to death—"Truly this was the Son of God." It was strange that those men should confess what the chief priests and scribes and elders denied, yet since their day it has often happened that the most abandoned and profane have acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God while their religious rulers have denied His Divinity.

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Luke 23,46 #2644 - The Last Words of Christ on the

THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

NO. 2644

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 25, 1882.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands

I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost."

Luke 23:46.

"Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O LORD God of

Truth."

Psalms 31:5.

"And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and asking, Lord Je

sus, receive my spirit."

Acts 7:59.

THIS morning, dear Friends, I spoke upon the first recorded words of

our Lord Jesus [Sermon #1666, Volume 28—The First Recorded Words of Jesus—read/download the entire sermon free of charge athttp://www.spurgeongems.org] when He said to His mother and to Joseph, "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Now, by the help of the blessed Spirit, we will consider the last words of our Lord Jesus before He gave up the ghost. And with them we will examine two other passages in which similar expressions are used.

The words, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," if we judge them to be the last which our Savior uttered before His death, ought to be coupled with those other words, "It is finished," which some have thought were actually the last He used. I think it was not so, but, anyway, these utterances must have followed each other very quickly and we may blend them together. And then we shall see how very similar they are to His first words as we explained them this morning. There is the cry, "It is finished," which you may read in connection with our Authorized Version—"Did you

not know that I must be about My Father's business?" That business was all finished—He had been about it all His life and now that He had come to the end of His days, there was nothing left undone—and He could say to His Father, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

Then if you take the other utterance of our Lord on the Cross, "Father, into your hands I commend My spirit," see how well it agrees with the other reading of our morning text, "Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" Jesus is putting Himself into the Father's hands because He had always desired to be there, in the Father's house with the Father. And now He is committing His spirit, as a sacred trust, into the

Volume 45 1Father's hands that He may depart to be with the Father, to abide in His house, and go no more out forever.

Christ's life is all of a piece, just as the alpha and the omega are letters of the same alphabet. You do not find Him one thing at the first, another thing afterwards, and a third thing still later—He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." There is a wondrous similarity about everything that Christ said and did. You never need write the name, "Jesus," under any of His sayings as you have to put the names of human writers under their sayings, for there is no mistaking any sentence that He has uttered!

If there is anything recorded as having been done by Christ, a believing child can judge whether it is authentic or not. Those miserable false gospels that were brought out did very little, if any mischief, because nobody with any true spiritual discernment was ever duped into believing them to be genuine! It is possible to manufacture a spurious coin which will, for a time, pass for a good one, but it is not possible to make even a passable imitation of what Jesus Christ has said and done! Everything about Christ is like Himself—there is a Christ-likeness about it which cannot be mistaken! This morning, for instance, when I preached about the Holy Child Jesus, I am sure you must have felt that there was never another child as He was. And in His death He was as unique as in His birth, childhood and life. There was never another who died as He did and there was never another who lived altogether as He did. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands by Himself! Some of us try to imitate Him, but how feebly do we follow in His steps! The Christ of God still stands by Himself and He has no rival!

I have already intimated to you that I am going to have three texts for my sermon, but when I have spoken upon all three of them, you will see that they are so much alike that I might have been content with one of them.

I. I invite you first to consider OUR SAVIOR'S WORDS JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Here observe, first, how Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God. Christ was a grand original thinker and He might always have given us words of His own. He never lacked suitable language, for, "never man spoke like this Man." Yet you must have noticed how continually He quoted Scripture—the great majority of His expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, His words drop into Scriptural shape and form! You can see that the Bible has been His one Book. He is evidently familiar with it from the first page to the last and not with its letter, only, but with the innermost soul of its most secret sense and, therefore, when dying, it seemed but natural for Him to use a passage from a Psalm of

David as His expiring words. In His death, He was not driven beyond the power of quiet thought—He was not unconscious, He did not die of weakness—He was strong even while He was dying! It is true that He said, "I thirst," but, after He had been a little refreshed, He cried with a loud voice, as only a strong man could, "It is finished!" And now, before He bows His head in the silence of death, He utters His final words, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Our Lord might, I say again, have made an original speech as His dying declaration. His mind was clear, calm, and undisturbed—in fact, He was perfectly happy, for He had said, "It is finished!" So His sufferings were over and He was already beginning to enjoy a taste of the sweets of victory. Yet, with all that clearness of mind, freshness of intellect and fluency of words that might have been possible to Him, He did not invent a new sentence, but He went to the Book of Psalms and took from the Holy Spirit this expression," Into Your hands I commend My spirit."

How instructive to us is this great Truth of God that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word! It was food to Him, as it is to us and, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this Book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon Him without measure, yet He loved the Scripture and He went to it, studied it and used its expressions continually. Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord—not crawl over its surface, but eat right into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts! It is idle to merely let the eyes glance over the Words, or to remember the poetical expressions, or the historic facts—but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models—and, what is still better, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord!

I would quote John Bunyan as an instance of what I mean. Read anything of his and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had studied our Authorized Version, which will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture and though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his Pilgrim's Progress—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, "Why, this man is a living Bible!" Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline—the very essence of the Bible flows from him! He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend His example to you, Beloved and, still more, the example of our Lord Jesus! If the Spirit of God is in you, He will make you love the Word of God and, if any of you imagine that the Spirit of God will lead you to dispense with the Bible, you are under the influence of another spirit which is not the Spirit of God at all! I trust that the Holy Spirit will endear to you every page of this Divine Record so that you will feed upon it and, afterwards, speak it out to others. I think it is well worthy of your constant remembrance that, even in death, our blessed Master showed the ruling passion of His spirit so that His last words were a quotation from Scripture.

Now notice, secondly, that our Lord, in the moment of His death, recognized a personal God. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." God is to some men an unknown God. "There may be a God," so they say, but they get no nearer the truth than that. "All things are God," says another. "We cannot be sure that there is a God," say others, "and, therefore, it is no use our pretending to believe in Him and so to be, possibly, influenced by a supposition." Some people

say, "Oh, certainly, there is a God, but He is very far off! He does not come near to us and we cannot imagine that He will interfere in our affairs." Ah, but our blessed Lord Jesus Christ believed in no such impersonal, pantheistic, dreamy, far-off God, but in One to whom He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." His language shows that He realized the Personality of God as much as I would recognize the personality of a banker if I said to him, "Sir, I commit that money into your hands." I know that I should not say such a thing as that to a mere dummy, or to an abstract something or nothing—but I would say it to a living man and I would say it only to a living man.

So, Beloved, men do not commit their souls into the keeping of impalpable nothings! They do not, in death, smile as they resign themselves to the infinite unknown, the cloudy "Father of everything," who may be nothing or everything. No, no, we only trust what we know! And so Jesus knew the Father, and knew Him to be a real Person having hands—and into those hands He commended His departing spirit. I am not now speaking materially, mark you, as though God had hands like ours, but He is an actual Being, who has powers of action, who is able to deal with men as He pleases and who is willing to take possession of their spirits and to protect them forever and ever. Jesus speaks like one who believed that and I pray that, both in life and in death, you and I may always deal with God in the same way. We have far too much fiction in religion—and a religion of fiction will bring only fictitious comfort in the dying hour. Come to solid facts! Is God as real to you as you are to yourself? Come now, do you speak with Him, "as a man speaks unto his friend"? Can you trust Him and rely upon Him as you trust and rely upon the partner of your bosom? If your God is unreal, your religion is unreal! If your God is a dream, your hope will be a dream and woe be unto you when you shall wake up out of it!

It was not so that Jesus trusted. "Father," He said, "into Your hands I commend My spirit."

But, thirdly, here is a still better point. Observe how Jesus Christ here brings out the Fatherhood of God. The Psalm from which He quoted did not say, "Father." David did not get as far as that in words, though in spirit he often did. But Jesus had the right to alter the Psalmist's words. He can improve on Scripture, though you and I cannot. He did not say, "O God, into Your hands I commend My spirit." He said, "Father." Oh, that sweet word! That was the gem of our thought, this morning, that Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be at My Father's—that I must be in My Father's house!" Oh, yes, the Holy Child knew that He was especially and, in a peculiar sense, the Son of the Highest, and therefore He said, "My Father." And, in dying, His expiring heart was buoyed up and comforted with the thought that God was His Father. It was because He said that God was His Father that they put Him to death, yet He still stood to it even in His dying hour and said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit"! What a blessed thing it is for us, also, my Brothers and Sisters, to die conscious that we are children of God! Oh, how sweet, in life and in death, to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father"! In such a case as that—

"It is not death to die."

Quoting the Savior's words, "It is finished," and relying upon His Father and our Father, we may go even into the jaws of death without the "quivering lips" of which we sang just now. Joyful, with all the strength we have, our lips may confidently sing, challenging death and the grave to silence our ever-rising and swelling music! O my Father, my Father, if I am in your hands, I may die without

fear!

There is another thought, however, which is perhaps the best one of all. From this passage we learn that our Divine Lord cheerfully rendered up His soul to His Father when the time had come for Him to die. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." None of us can, with strict propriety, use these words. When we come to die, we may perhaps utter them and God will accept them—these were the very death-words of Polycarp, Bernard, Luther, Melanchthon, Jerome of Prague, John Huss and an almost endless list of saints—"Into Your hands I commend my spirit." The Old Testament rendering of the passage, or else our Lord's version of it, has been turned into a Latin prayer and commonly used among Romanists almost as a charm—they have repeated the Latin words when dying, or, if they were unable to do so, the priest repeated the words for them, attaching a sort of magical power to that particular formula! But, in the sense in which our Savior uttered these words, we cannot, any of us, fully use them. We can commit or commend our spirit to God, but yet, Brothers and Sisters, remember that unless the Lord comes first, we must die—and dying is not an act on our part. We have to be passive in the process because it is no longer in our power to retain our life. I suppose that if a man could have such control of his life, it might be questionable when he would surrender it because suicide is a crime and no man can be required to kill himself. God does not demand such action as that at any man's hands and, in a certain sense, that is what would happen whenever a man yielded himself to death.

But there was no necessity for our blessed Lord and Master to die except the necessity which He had taken upon Himself in becoming the Substitute for His people! There was no necessity for His death even at the last moment upon the Cross, for, as I have reminded you, He cried with a loud voice when natural weakness would have compelled Him to whisper or to sigh. But His life was strong within Him—if He had willed to do so, He could have unloosed the nails and come down into the midst of the crowd that stood mocking Him! He died of His own free will, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." A man may righteously surrender his life for the good of his country and for the safety of others. There have frequently been opportunities for men to do this and there have been brave fellows who have worthily done it. But all those men would have had to die at some time or other. They were only slightly anticipating the payment of the debt of nature. But, in our Lord's case, He was rendering up to the Father the sprit which He might have kept if He had chosen to do so. "No man takes it from Me," He said concerning His life. "I lay it down of Myself."

And there is here a cheerful willingness to yield up His spirit into His Father's hands! It is rather remarkable that none of the Evangelists describe our Lord as dying. He did die, but they all speak of Him as giving up the ghost—surrendering to God His spirit. You and I passively die, but He actively yielded up His spirit to His Father. In His case, death was an act and He performed that act from the glorious motive of redeeming us from death and Hell! So, in this sense, Christ stands alone in His death.

But, oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot render up our spirit as He did, yet, when our life is taken from us, let us be perfectly ready to give it up! May God bring us into such a state of mind and heart that there shall be no struggling to keep our life, but a sweet willingness to let it be just as God would have it—a yielding up of everything into His hands, feeling sure that, in the world of spirits, our soul shall be quite safe in the Father's hands and that, until the Resurrection Day, the

lifegerm of the body will be securely in His keeping, and certain that when the trumpet shall sound, spirit, soul and body—that trinity of our manhood—shall be reunited in the absolute perfection of our being to behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off! When God calls us to die, it will be a sweet way of dying if we can, like our Lord, pass away with a text of Scripture upon our lips, with a personal God ready to receive us, with that God recognized distinctly as our Father and so die joyously, resigning our will entirely to the sweet will of the ever-blessed One, and saying, "It is the Lord." "My Father." "Let Him do as seems good to Him."

II. My second text is in the 31st Psalm, at the 5th verse. And it is evidently the passage which our Savior had in His mind just then "Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." It seems to me that THESE ARE WORDS TO BE USED IN LIFE, for this Psalm is not so much concerning the Believer's death as concerning his life.

Is it not very amazing, dear Friends, that the words which Jesus uttered on the Cross you may still continue to use? You may catch up their echo and not only when you come to die, but tonight, tomorrow morning and as long as you are alive, you may still repeat the text the Master quoted, and say, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit."

That is to say, first, let us cheerfully entrust our souls to God and feel that they are quite safe in His hands. Our spirit is the noblest part of our being; our body is only the husk, our spirit is the living kernel, so let us put it into God's keeping. Some of you have never yet done that, so I invite you to do it now. It is the act of faith which saves the soul, that act which a man performs when he says, "I trust myself to God as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus. I cannot keep myself, but He can keep me and, by the precious blood of Christ He can cleanse me. So I just take my spirit and give it over into the great Father's hands." You never really live till you do that! All that comes before that act of full surrender is death! But when you have once trusted Christ, then you have truly begun to live. And every day, as long as you live, take care that you repeat this process and cheerfully leave yourselves in God's hands without any reserve. That is to say, give yourself up to God—your body, to be healthy or to be sick, to be long-lived or to be suddenly cut off. Your soul and spirit, give them, also, up to God, to be made happy or to be made sad, just as He pleases. Give Your whole self up to Him and say to Him, "My Father, make me rich or make me poor, give me sight or make me blind. Let me have all my senses or take them away. Make me famous or leave me to be obscure. I give myself up to You—into Your hands I commit my spirit. I will no longer exercise my own choice, but You shall choose My inheritance for me. My times are in Your hands."

Now, dear children of God, are you always doing this? Have you ever done it? I am afraid that there are some, even among Christ's professing followers, who kick against God's will and even when they say to God, "Your will be done," they spoil it by adding, in their own mind, "and my will, too." They pray, "Lord, make my will Your will," instead of saying, "Make Your will my will." Let us each one pray this prayer every day, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." I like, at family prayer, to put myself and all that I have into God's hands in the morning—and then, at night, to just look between His hands and see how safe I have been. And then to say to Him, "Lord, shut me up again tonight! Take care of me all through the night watches. 'Into Your hands I commit my spirit.'"

Notice, dear Friends, that our second text has these words at the end of it—"You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." Is not that a good reason for giving yourself up entirely to God? Christ has redeemed you and, therefore, you belong to Him. If I am a redeemed man and I ask God to

take care of me, I am but asking the King to take care of one of His own jewels—a jewel that cost Him the blood of His heart!

And I may still more especially expect that He will do so, because of the title which is here given to Him—"You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." Would He be the God of Truth if He began with redemption and ended with destruction—if He began by giving His Son to die for us and then kept back other mercies which we daily need to bring us to Heaven? No, the gift of His Son is the pledge that He will save His people from their sins and bring them home to Glory—and He will do it. So, every day, go to Him with this declaration, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." No, not only every day, but all through the day! Does a horse run away with you? Then you cannot do better than say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." And if the horse does not run away with you, you cannot do better than say the same words! Have you to go into a house where there is fever? I mean, is it your duty to go there? Then go saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I would advise you to do this every time you walk down the street, or even while you sit in your own house.

Dr. Gill, my famous predecessor, spent very much time in his study and, one day, somebody said to him, "Well, at any rate, the studious man is safe from most of the accidents of life." It so happened that one morning, when the good man left his familiar armchair for a little while, there came a gale of wind that blew down a stack of chimneys which crashed through the roof and fell right into the place where he would have been sitting if the Providence of God had not just then drawn him away! And he said, "I see that we need Divine Providence to care for us in our studies just as much as in the streets." "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I have often noticed that if any of our friends get into accidents and troubles, it is usually when they are away for a holiday. It is a curious thing, but I have often remarked about it. They go out for their health and come home sick! They leave us with all their limbs whole and return to us crippled! Therefore we must pray God to take special care of friends in the country or by the sea—and we must commit ourselves to His hands wherever we may be. If we had to go into a leper colony, we would certainly ask God to protect us from the deadly leprosy. But we ought to equally seek the Lord's protection while dwelling in the healthiest place or in our own homes!

David said to the Lord, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." But let me beg you to add that word which our Lord inserted—"Father." David is often a good guide for us, but David's Lord is far better. And if we follow Him, we shall improve upon David. So, let us each say, "Father, Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." That is a sweet way of living every day—committing everything to our Heavenly Father's hands, for those hands can do His child no unkindness. "Father, I might not be able to trust Your angels, but I can trust You." The Psalmist does not say, "Into the hand of Providence I commit my spirit." Do you notice how men try to get rid of God by saying, "Providence did this," and, "Providence did that," and, "Providence did the other"? If you ask them, "What is Providence?"—they will probably reply, "Well, Providence is Providence." That is all they can say.

There is many a man who talks very confidently about reverencing nature, obeying the laws of nature, noting the powers of nature and so on. Step up to that eloquent lecturer and say to him, "Will you kindly explain to me what nature is?" He answers, "Why, nature—well, it is—nature." Just so, Sir, but, what is nature? And he says, "Well—well—it is nature." And that is all you will get out

of him. Now, I believe in nature and I believe in Providence, but at the back of everything, I believe in God, and in the God who has hands—not in an idol that has no hands and can do nothing—but in the God to whom I can say, "'Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.' I rejoice that I am able to put myself there, for I feel absolutely safe in trusting myself to Your keeping." So live, Beloved, and you shall live safely, happily and you shall have hope in your life, and hope in your death!

III. My third text will not detain us many minutes. It is intended to explain to us THE USE OF OUR SAVIOR'S DYING WORDS FOR OURSELVES. Turn to the account of the death of Stephen, in the 7th chapter of Acts, at the 59th verse, and you will see, there, how far a man of God may dare to go in his last moments in quoting from David and from the Lord Jesus Christ. "And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So here is a text for us to use when we come to die—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." I have explained to you that, strictly, we can hardly talk of yielding up our spirit, but we may speak of Christ receiving it and say with Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

What does this prayer mean? I must just hurriedly give you two or three thoughts concerning it and so close my discourse. I think this prayer means that, if we can die as Stephen did, we shall die with a certainty of immortality. Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He did not say, "I am afraid my poor spirit is going to die." No, the spirit is something which still exists after death, something which Christ can receive and, therefore, Stephen asks Him to receive it! You and I are not going upstairs to die as if we were only like cats and dogs—we go up there to die like immortal beings who fall asleep on earth and open our eyes in Heaven! Then, at the sound of the archangel's trumpet, our very body is to rise to dwell, again, with our spirit—we have not any question about this matter! I think I have told you what an infidel once said to a Christian man, "Some of you Christians have great fear in dying because you believe that there is another state to follow this one. I have not the slightest fear, for I believe that I shall be annihilated and, therefore, all fear of death is gone from me." "Yes," said the Christian, "and in that respect you seem to me to be on equal terms with that bull grazing over there, which, like yourself, is free from any fear of death. Pray, Sir, let me ask you a simple question. Have you any hope?" "Hope, Sir? Hope, Sir? No, I have no hope! Of course I have no hope, Sir." "Ah, then!" replied the other, "despite the fears that sometimes come over feeble Believers, they have a hope which they would not and could not give up." And that hope is that our spirit—even that spirit which we commit into Jesus Christ's hands—shall be "forever with the Lord."

The next thought is that, to a man who can die as Stephen did, there is a certainty that Christ is near—so near that the man speaks to Him and says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." In Stephen's case, the Lord Jesus was so near that the martyr could see Him, for he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Many dying saints have borne a similar testimony. It is no strange thing for us to hear them say, before they die, that they could see within the pearly gates and they have told us this with such evident truthfulness, and with such rapture, or sometimes so calmly—in such a businesslike tone of voice—we were sure that they were neither deceived nor speaking falsehood. They spoke what they knew to be true, for Jesus was there with them! Yes, Beloved, before you can call your children around your deathbed, Jesus will already be there! And into His hands you may commit your spirit.

Moreover, there is a certainty that we are quite safe in His hands. Wherever else we are insecure, if we ask Him to receive our spirit, and He receives it, who can hurt us? Who can pluck us out of His hands? Awaken, Death and hail! Come forth, all you powers of darkness! What can you do when once a spirit is in the hands of the Omnipotent Redeemer? We will be safe there!

Then there is the other certainty, that He is quite willing to take us into His hands. Let us put ourselves into His hands now—and then we need not be ashamed to repeat the operation every day and we may be sure that we shall not be rejected at the last. I have often told you of the good old woman who was dying and to whom someone said, "Are you not afraid to die?" "Oh, no," she replied, "there is nothing at all to fear. I have dipped my foot in the river of death every morning before I have had my breakfast, and I am not afraid to die now." You remember that dear saint who died in the night, and who had left written on a piece of paper by her bedside these lines which, before she fell asleep, she felt strong enough to pencil down?—

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing, But gladly put off these garments of clay— To die in the Lord, is a Covenant blessing,

Since Jesus to Glory thro' death led the way."

It was well that she could say it—and may we be able to say the same whenever the Master calls us to go up higher! I want, dear Friends, that we should, all of us, have as much willingness to depart as if it were a matter of will with us! Blessed be God it is not left to our choice—it is not left to our will when we shall die. God has appointed that day and ten thousand devils cannot consign us to the grave before our time! We shall not die till God decrees it—

"Plagues and deaths around me fly, Till He please I cannot die! Not a single shaft can hit Till the God of love sees fit."

But let us be just as willing to depart as if it were really a matter of choice, for, wisely, carefully, coolly consider that if it were left to us, we should none of us be wise if we did not choose to go! Apart from the coming of our Lord, the most miserable thing that I know of would be a suspicion that we might not die. Do you know what quaint old Rowland Hill used to say when he found himself getting very old? He said, "Surely they must be forgetting me up there." And every now and then, when some dear old saint was dying, he would say, "When you get to Heaven, give my love to John Berridge, and John Bunyan and ever so many more of the good Johns, and tell them I hope they will see poor old Rowley up there before long." Well, there was common sense in that wishing to get Home, longing to be with God. To be with Christ is far better than to be here!

Sobriety itself would make us choose to die! Well, then, do not let us run back and become utterly unwilling and struggle and strive and fret and fume over it. When I hear of Believers who do not like to talk about death, I am afraid concerning them. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our resting place. When I went, recently, to the cemetery at Norwood, to lay the body of our dear Brother Perkins there for a little while, I felt that it was a healthy thing for me to stand at the grave's brink and to walk amid that forest of memorials of the dead, for this is where I, too, must go. You living men, come and view the ground where you must shortly lie and, as it must be so, let us who are Believers welcome it!

But, what if you are not Believers? Ah, that is another matter altogether! If you have not believed in Christ, you may well be afraid even to rest on the seat where you are sitting! I wonder that the earth itself does not say, "O God, I will not hold this wretched sinner up any longer! Let me open my mouth and swallow him!" All nature must hate the man who hates God! Surely, all things must loathe to minister to the life of a man who does not live unto God. Oh that you would seek the Lord and trust Christ and find eternal life! If you have done so, do not be afraid to go forth to live, or to die, just as God pleases.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 15:1-8.

Verse 1. I am the true vine. Now we know where to find the true

Church. It is to be found only in Christ and in those who are joined to Him in mystical but real union. "I am the true vine."

1. And My Father is the vinedresser. Now we know who is the true Guardian of the Church. Not the so-called "holy father" at Rome, but that Father above, who is the true Guardian, Ruler, Keeper, Preserver, Purifier, Vinedresser of the one Church, the vine!

2. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away. There are many such branches, in Christ's visible Church which are not fruitbearing branches and, consequently, are not partakers of the sap of life and Grace which flows into the branches that are vitally joined to the central stem. These fruitless branches are to be taken away.

2. And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. There is some work, then, for the knife upon all the branches—cutting off for those that are fruitless—cutting for those that are bearing some fruit that they may bring forth yet more.

3. Now you are clean [purged] through the word which I have spoken unto you. The Word is often the knife with which the great Vinedresser prunes the vine. And, Brothers and Sisters, if we were more willing to feel the edge of the Word, and to let it cut away even something that may be very dear to us, we would not need so much pruning by affliction. It is because that first knife does not always produce the desired result that another sharp tool is used by which we are effectually pruned.

4. Abide in Me, and I in you. "Do not merely find a temporary shelter in Me, as a ship runs into harbor in stormy weather and then comes out again when the gale is over, but cast anchor in Me, as the vessel does when it reaches its desired haven. Be not as branches that are tied on and so can be taken off, but be livingly joined to Me. 'Abide in Me.'"

4. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me. You must bear fruit, or else be cast away, but you cannot bear any fruit except by real union and constant communion with Jesus Christ your Lord!

5. I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. Not merely will you do very little, but you can do nothing at all if you are severed from Christ! You are absolutely and entirely dependent upon

Christ, both for your life and for your fruit-bearing. Do we not wish to have it so, Beloved? It is the incipient principle of apostasy when a man wishes to be independent of Christ in any degree—when he says, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me that I may have something in hand, some spending money of my own." No, you must, from day to day, from hour to hour and even from moment to moment, derive life, light, love, everything that is good from Christ! What a blessing that it is so!

6. If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. There is a sad future in store for tares, according to another parable, but, somehow, there is a much sadder lot reserved for those that were, in some sense, branches of the vine—those who made a profession of faith in Christ, though they were never vitally united to Him. Those who, for a while, did rum well, yet were hindered. What was it that hindered them that they should not obey the Truth of God? Oh, it is sad, indeed, that any should have had any sort of connection with that Divine Stem and yet should be cast into the fire!

7. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Do not think that all men can pray alike effectually, for it is not so. There are some whom God will hear and some whom God will not hear. And there are some even of His own children whom He will hear in things absolutely vital and essential, to whom He never gave carte blanche after this fashion. "You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." No, if you will not hear God's words, He will not hear yours! And if His words do not abide in you, your words shall not have power with Him. They may be directed to Heaven, but the Lord will not listen to them so as to have regard to them. Oh, it needs very tender walking for one who would be mighty in prayer! You shall find that those who have had their will at the Throne of Grace are men who have done God's will in other places—it mast be so. The greatest favorite at court will have a double portion of the jealousy of his monarch, and he must be especially careful that he orders his steps aright, or else the king will not continue to favor him as he was known to do. There is a sacred discipline in Christ's house, a part of which consists in this, that, as our obedience to our God declines, so will our power in prayer decrease at the same time.

8. Herein is My Father glorified, that he bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. If we are His true disciples, we also shall bring forth much fruit.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY

TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 23,46 3178 - The Preparatory Prayers of Chris

THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST

NO. 3178

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 7, 1873.

"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus,
also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the
Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him,
and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My
Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

Luke 3:21-22.

"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain
to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was
day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose
twelve, whom also He named Apostles."

Luke 6:12-13.

"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took
Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.
And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered,
and His raiment was white and glistening."

Luke 9:28-29.

"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain
apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But
the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the

wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus

went unto them, walking on the sea."

Matthew 14:23-25.

"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid.

And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people

here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me."

John 11:41-42.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you,

that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith

fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren."

Luke 22:31-32.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your

hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost."

Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which

everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preacher, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to preach, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the preparatory prayers of Christ—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for

suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21-22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased." There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore audible testimony to Christ. And on

each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ's prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, "Behold, he prays," before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles."

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, "in a bodily shape like a dove," to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will reMal. in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! "Draw near

Volume 56 3to God, and He will draw near to you," not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior's preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication on our part in similar circumstances. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit's blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12-13—"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PRO

TRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His

disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles."

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might

have said to Himself, "I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them." He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father's ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father's authority and the Spirit's power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God's blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior's example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

"With You all night I mean to stay, And wrestle till the break of day."

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan's long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis

Volume 56 5ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, "Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!"

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28-29—"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening." You see that it was as He prayed that He was transfigured.

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor's top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD'S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41-42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until first He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31-32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

Volume 56 7PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter before he was tempted. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may not fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

"But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purseproud." Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

"Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him." Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311,

Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS

OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at

http://.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

Volume 56 9While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the

all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that a saved man does is to pray—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

"Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice, Returning from his ways While angels in their songs rejoice, And cry, 'Behold, he prays!' Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, The Christian's native air! His watchword at the gates of death He enters Heaven with prayer!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Luke 18:1-14.

Verse 1. And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought

always to pray, and not to faint. [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] An old writer says that many of Christ's parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—"that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." And this is the parable.

2. Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. And he would not for a while. He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God, nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, "that I may not be worried to death by this woman's continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary."

6, 7. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them? [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose

His people from eternity! "Shall not God avenge His own elect?" Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and "cry day and night unto Him."

8. I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? [See Sermon #1963, Volume

33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. Two men went up into the Temple to pray. [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—

THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for

prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in these days—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found, And every place is hallowed ground."

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—"or even as this publican." What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God's sight!

Volume 56 11 12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. And the publican, standing afar off—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [See Sermon #1949, Volume

33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was all prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, "a sinner." He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican's prayer, it is, "God be propitious to me," that is, "be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice." And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee's boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. I tell you, this man—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, "this man"—

14. Went down to his house justified rather than the other. He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download

the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

14. For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 41

Luke 23,48 #860 - Mourning at the Sight of the Cru

MOURNING AT THE SIGHT

OF THE CRUCIFIED

NO. 860

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 14, 1869,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things

which were done, smote their breasts and returned."

Luke 23:48.

MANY in that crowd came together to behold the crucifixion of Jesus, in a condition of the most furious malice. They had hounded the Savior as dogs pursue a stag and at last, all mad with rage, they hemmed Him in for death. Others, willing enough to spend an idle hour and to gaze upon a sensational spectacle, swelled the mob until a vast assembly congregated around the little hill upon which the three crosses were raised. There unanimously, whether of malice or of wantonness, they all joined in mockery of the Victim who hung upon the center Cross. Some thrust out their tongue. Some wagged their heads. Others scoffed and jeered—some taunted Him in words and others in signs—but all alike exulted over the defenseless man who was given as a prey to their teeth.

Earth never beheld a scene in which so much unrestrained derision and expressive contempt were poured upon one man so unanimously and for so long a time. It must have been hideous to the last degree to have seen so many grinning faces and mocking eyes and to have heard so many cruel words and scornful shouts. The spectacle was too detestable to be long endured of Heaven. Suddenly the sun, shocked at the scene, veiled his face and for three long hours the ribald crew sat shivering in midday midnight.

Meanwhile the earth trembled beneath their feet. The rocks were split and the temple, in superstitious defense of whose perpetuity they had committed the murder of the Just, had its holy veil torn as though by strong invisible hands. The news of this and the feeling of horror produced by the darkness and the earth tremor caused a revulsion of feelings. There were no more gibes and jests. No more thrusting out of tongues and cruel mockeries—they went their way solitary and alone to their homes, or in little silent groups, while each man after the manner of Orientals when struck with sudden urge, smote upon his breast.

Far different was the procession to the gates of Jerusalem from that march of madness which had come out. Observe the power which God has over human minds! See how He can tame the wildest and make the most malicious and proud to cower down at His feet when He does but manifest Himself in the wonders of Nature! How much more cowed and terrified will they be when He makes bare His arm and comes forth in the judgments of His wrath to deal with them according to their deeds! This sudden and memorable change in so vast a multitude is the apt representative of two other remarkable mental changes. How like it is to the gracious transformation which a sight of the Cross has often worked most blessedly in the hearts of men!

Many have come under the sound of the Gospel resolved to scoff, but they have returned to pray. The most idle and even the basest motives have brought men under the preaching, but when Jesus has been lifted up, they have been savingly drawn to Him and as a consequence have struck upon their breasts in repentance and gone their way to serve the Savior whom they once blasphemed. Oh, the power, the melting, conquering, transforming power of that dear Cross of Christ! My Brethren, we have but to abide by the preaching of it. We have but constantly to tell abroad the matchless story and we may expect to see the most remarkable spiritual results!

We need despair of no man now that Jesus has died for sinners. With such a hammer as the doctrine of the Cross, the most flinty heart will be broken! And with such a fire as the sweet love of Christ, the most mighty iceberg will be melted! We need never despair for the heathenish or superstitious races of men. If we can but find occasion to bring the doctrine of Christ Crucified into contact with their natures, it will yet change them and Christ will be their king.

A second and most awful change is also foretold by the incident in our text, namely, the effect which a sight of Christ enthroned will have upon the proud and obstinate, who in this life rebelled against Him. Here they fearlessly jested concerning Him and insultingly demanded, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him?" Here they boldly united in a conspiracy to break His bands asunder and cast His cords from them. But when they wake up at the blast of the trumpet and see the Great White Throne, which, like a mirror, shall reflect their conduct upon them, what a change will be in their minds!

Where now your quibbles and your jests? Where now your malicious speeches and your persecuting words? What? Is there not one among you who can play the man and insult the Man of Nazareth to His face? No, not one! Like cowardly dogs they slink away! The infidel's bragging tongue is silent! The proud spirit of the atheist is broken—his blustering and his carping are hushed forever! With shrieks of dismay and clamorous cries of terror, they entreat the hills to cover them and the mountains to conceal them from the face of that very Man whose Cross was once the subject of their scorn! O take heed, you sinners, take heed, I pray you and be you changed this day by Divine Grace, lest you be changed by-and-by by terror, for the heart which will not be bent by the love of Christ shall be broken by the terror of His name!

If Jesus upon the Cross does not save you, Christ on the Throne shall damn you! If Christ dying is not your life, Christ living shall be your death! If Christ on earth is not your Heaven, Christ coming from Heaven shall be your Hell! O may God's Grace work a blessed turning of Grace in each of us, that we may not be turned into Hell in the dread day of reckoning! We shall now draw nearer to the text and in the first place, analyze the general mourning around the Cross. Secondly, we shall, if God shall help us, endeavor to join in the sorrowful chorus. And then, before we conclude, we

shall remind you that at the foot of the Cross our sorrow must be mingled with joy.

I. First, then, let us ANALYZE THE GENERAL MOURNING which this text describes. "All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned." They all smote their breasts, but not all from the same cause. They were all afraid, not all from the same reason. The outward manifestations were alike in the whole mass, but the grades of difference in feeling were as many as the minds in which they ruled. There were many, no doubt, who were merely moved with a transient emotion.

They had seen the death agonies of a remarkable Man, and the attendant wonders had persuaded them that He was something more than an ordinary being, and therefore they were afraid. With a kind of indefinite fear, grounded upon no very intelligent reasoning, they were alarmed because God was angry and had closed the eye of day upon them and made the rocks to split. Burdened with this indistinct fear, they went their way trembling and humbled to their homes. But perhaps before the next morning light had dawned they had forgotten it all and the next day found them greedy for another bloody spectacle and ready to nail another Christ to the cross, if there had been such another to be found in the land.

Their beating of the breast was not a breaking of the heart. It was an April shower, a dewdrop of the morning, a hoar-frost that dissolved when the sun had risen. Like a shadow the emotion crossed their minds and like a shadow it left no trace behind. How often, in the preaching of the Cross, has this been the only result in tens of thousands! In this house, where so many souls have been converted, many more have shed tears which have been wiped away and the reason of their tears has been forgotten. A handkerchief has dried up their emotions. Alas! Alas, that while it may be difficult to move men with the story of the Cross to weeping, it is even more difficult to make those emotions permanent.

"I have seen something amazing, this morning," said one who had listened to a faithful and earnest preacher, "I have seen a whole congregation in tears." "Alas!" said the preacher, "there is something more amazing still, for the most of them will go their way to forget that they ever shed a tear." Ah, my Hearers, shall it be always so—always so? Then, O you impenitent, there shall come to your eyes a tear which shall drip forever—a scalding drop which no mercy shall ever wipe away—a thirst that shall never be abated! There shall come to you a worm that shall never die and a fire that never shall be quenched! By the love you bear your souls, I pray you escape from the wrath to come!

Others among that great crowd exhibited emotion based upon more thoughtful reflection. They saw that they had shared in the murder of an innocent Person. "Alas," they said, "we see through it all now. That Man was no offender. In all that we have ever heard or seen of Him, He did good and only good! He always healed the sick, fed the hungry and raised the dead. There is not a word of all His teaching that is really contrary to the Law of God. He was a pure and holy Man. We have all been duped. Those priests have egged us on to put to death One whom it were a thousand mercies if we could restore to life again at once. Our race has killed its Benefactor."

"Yes," says one, "I thrust out my tongue. I found it almost impossible to restrain myself when everybody else was laughing and mocking at His tortures. But I am afraid I have mocked at the innocent, and I tremble lest the darkness which God has sent was His reprobation of my

wickedness in oppressing the innocent." Such feelings would abide, but I can suppose that they might not bring men to sincere repentance—for while they might feel sorry that they had oppressed the innocent—yet, perceiving nothing more in Jesus than mere evil-treated virtue and suffering manhood, the natural emotion might soon pass away and the moral and spiritual result be of no great value.

How frequently have we seen in our hearers that same description of emotion! They have regretted that Christ should be put to death. They have felt like that old king of France, who said, "I wish I had been there with 10,000 of my soldiers—I would have cut their throats sooner than they should have touched Him." But those very feelings have been evidence that they did not feel their share in the guilt as they ought to have done and that to them the Cross of Jesus was no more a saving spectacle than the death of a common martyr. Dear Hearers, beware of making the Cross to be a commonplace thing with you! Look beyond the sufferings of the innocent Manhood of Jesus and see upon the Cross the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, or else you look to the Cross in vain.

No doubt there were a few in the crowd who smote upon their breasts because they felt, "We have put to death a Prophet of God. As of old our nation slew Isaiah and put to death others of the Master's servants, so today they have nailed to the Cross one of the last of the Prophets and His blood will be upon us and upon our children." Perhaps some of them said, "This man claimed to be Messiah and the miracles which attended His death prove that He was so. His life betokens it and His death declares it. What will become of our nation if we have slain the Prince of Peace? How will God visit us if we have put His Prophet to death!"

Such mourning was in advance of other forms. It showed a deeper thought and a clearer knowledge and it may have been an admirable preparation for the later hearing of the Gospel—but it would not of itself suffice as evidence of Grace. I shall be glad if my hearers in this house today are persuaded by the Character of Christ that He must have been a Prophet sent of God and that He was the Messiah promised of old. And I shall be gratified if they, therefore, lament the shameful cruelties which He received from our apostate race. Such emotions of compunction and pity are most commendable and under God's blessing they may prove to be the furrows of your heart in which the Gospel may take root. He who thus was cruelly put to death was God over all blessed forever, the world's Redeemer and the Savior of such as put their trust in Him! May you accept Him today as your Deliverer and so be saved, for if not, the most virtuous regrets concerning His death—however much they may indicate your enlightenment—will not manifest your true conversion.

In the motley company who all went home striking their breasts, let us hope that there were some who said, "Certainly this was the Son of God," and mourned to think He should have suffered for their transgressions and been put to grief for their iniquities. Those who came to that point were saved! Blessed were the eyes that looked upon the slaughtered Lamb in such a way as that and happy were the hearts that then and there were broken because He was bruised and put to grief for their sakes. Beloved, aspire to this! May God's Grace bring you to see in Jesus Christ no other than God made flesh, hanging upon the Cross in agony to die, the Just for the unjust, that we may be saved!

O come and repose your trust in Him and then strike upon your breasts at the thought that such a Victim should have been necessary for your redemption! Then may you cease to strike your

breasts and begin to clap your hands for very joy—for they who thus bewail a Savior may rejoice in Him—for He is theirs and they are His!

II. We shall now ask you To JOIN IN THE LAMENTATION, each man according to his sincerity of heart, beholding the Cross and striking upon his breast. We will by faith put ourselves at the foot of the little knoll of Calvary. There we see in the center, between two thieves, the Son of God made flesh, nailed by His hands and feet and dying in an anguish which words cannot portray. Look well, I pray you. Look steadfastly and devoutly, gazing through your tears. 'Tis He who was worshipped of angels who is now dying for the sons of men!

Sit down and watch the death of Death's Destroyer! I shall ask you first to strike your breasts, as you remember that you see in Him your own sins. How great He is! That crown of thorns is on the head once crowned with all the royalties of Heaven and earth! He who dies there is no common man! King of kings and Lord of lords is He who hangs on yonder Cross. Then see the greatness of your sins which required so vast a Sacrifice. They must be infinite sins to require an infinite Person to lay down His life in order to their removal. You can never compass or comprehend the greatness of your Lord in His essential Character and dignity. Neither shall you ever be able to understand the blackness and heinousness of the sin which demanded His life as an Atonement.

Brothers and Sisters, strike your breast and say, "God be merciful to me, the greatest of sinners, for I am such." Look well into the face of Jesus and see how vile they have made Him! They have stained those cheeks with spit! They have lashed those shoulders with a felon's scourge! They have put Him to the death which was only awarded to the meanest Roman slave! They have hung Him up between Heaven and earth as though He were fit for neither! They have stripped Him naked and left Him not a rag to cover Him!

See here, then, O Believer, the shame of your sins! What a shameful thing your sins must have been. What a disgraceful and abominable thing, if Christ must be made such a shame for you! O be ashamed of yourself, to think your Lord should thus be scorned and made nothing of for you! See how they aggravate His sorrows! It was not enough to crucify Him—they must insult Him! Nor that enough, they must mock His prayers and turn His dying cries into themes for jest while they offer Him vinegar to drink. See, Beloved, how aggravated were your sins and mine!

Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us all strike upon our breasts and say, "Oh, how our sins have piled up their guiltiness! It was not merely that we broke the Law, but we sinned against light and knowledge. We sinned against rebukes and warnings. As His griefs are aggravated, even so are our sins!" Look still into His dear face and see the lines of anguish which indicate the deeper inward sorrow which far transcends mere bodily pain and suffering. God, His Father, has forsaken Him! God has made Him a curse for us.

Then what must the curse of God have been against us? What must our sins have deserved? If when sin was only imputed to Christ and laid upon Him for awhile, His father turned His head away and made His Son cry out, "Lama Sabachthani!" Oh, what an accursed thing our sin must be and what a curse would have come upon us! What thunderbolts, what coals of fire, what indignation and wrath from the Most High must have been our portion had not Jesus interposed! If Jehovah did not spare His Son, how little would He have spared guilty, worthless men if He had dealt with us after our sins and rewarded us according to our iniquities!

As we still sit down and look at Jesus, we remember that His death was voluntary—He need not have died unless He had so willed. Here, then, is another striking feature of our sin, for our sin was voluntary, too. We did not sin as of compulsion, but we deliberately chose the evil way. O Sinner, let both of us sit down together and tell the Lord that we have no justification, or extenuation, or excuse to offer—we have sinned willfully against light and knowledge, against love and mercy. Let us strike upon our breasts, as we see Jesus willingly suffer and confess that we have willingly offended against the just and righteous Laws of a most good and gracious God.

I could gladly keep you looking into those five wounds and studying that marred face and counting every purple drop that flowed from hands and feet and side, but time would fail us. Only that one wound—let it abide with you—strike your breast because you see in Christ your sin. Looking again—changing, as it were, our standpoint, but still keeping our eye upon that same, dear Crucified One, let us see there the neglected and despised remedy for our sin. If sin itself, in its first condition, as rebellion, brings no tears to our eyes, it certainly ought, in its second manifestation, as ingratitude.

The sin of rebellion is vile. But the sin of slighting the Savior is viler still. He that hangs on the Cross in groans and griefs unutterable, is He whom some of you have never thought of—whom you do not love, to whom you never pray—in whom you place no confidence and whom you never serve. I will not accuse you. I will ask those dear wounds to do it, sweetly and tenderly. I will rather accuse myself, for, alas! Alas, there was a time when I heard of Him as with a deaf ear! There was a time when I was told of Him and understood the love He bore to sinners and yet my heart was like a stone within me and would not be moved! I stopped my ears and would not be charmed, even with such a master fascination as the disinterested love of Jesus!

I think if I had been spared to live the life of an ungodly man for 30, 40, or 50 years and had been converted at last, I should never have been able to blame myself sufficiently for rejecting Jesus during all those years. Why, even those of us who were converted in our youth and almost in our childhood cannot help blaming ourselves to think that so dear a Friend who had done so much for us, was so long slighted by us! Who could have done more for us than He, since He gave Himself for our sins? Ah, how we did wrong Him while we withheld our hearts from Him! O Sinners, how can you keep the doors of your hearts shut against the Friend of Sinners? How can we close the door against Him who cries, "My head is wet with dew and My locks with the drops of the night: open to Me, my Beloved, open to Me"?

I am persuaded there are some here who are His elect—you were chosen by Him from before the foundation of the world and you shall be with Him in Heaven one day to sing His praises and yet, at this moment, though you hear His name, you do not love Him. And though you are told of what He did, you do not trust Him. What? Shall that iron bar always fast close the gate of your heart? Shall that door be always bolted? O Spirit of the living God, win an entrance for the blessed Christ this morning! If anything can do it, surely it must be a sight of the Crucified Christ—that matchless spectacle shall make a heart of stone relent and melt—subdued by Jesus' love! O may the Holy Spirit work this gracious melting, and He shall have all the honor!

Still keeping you at the foot of the Cross, dear Friends, every Believer here may well strike upon his breast this morning as he thinks of who it was that smarted so upon the Cross. Who was it? It was He who loved us before the world was made! It was He who is this day the Bridegroom of our

souls, our Best-Beloved. He who has taken us into the banqueting house and waved His banner of love over us. It is He who has made us one with Himself, and has vowed to present us to His Father without spot. It is He, our Husband, our Ishi, who has called us His Hephzibah because His soul delights in us. It is He who suffered thus for us.

Suffering does not always excite the same degree of pity. You must know something of the individual before the innermost depths of the soul are stirred, and so it happens to us that the higher the character and the more able we are to appreciate it, the closer the relation and the more fondly we reciprocate the love—the more deeply does suffering strike the soul. You are coming to His Table, some of you, today, and you will partake of bread—I pray you remember that it represents the quivering flesh that was filled with pain on Calvary! You will sip of that cup—then be sure to remember that it betokens to you the blood of One who loves you better than you could be loved by mother, or by husband, or by friend!

O sit down and strike your breasts that He should grieve! That heaven's Sun should be eclipsed! That Heaven's Lily should be spotted with blood and Heaven's Rose should be whitened with a deadly pallor! Lament that Perfection should be accused, Innocence struck and Love murdered—and that Christ, the happy and the holy, the ever blessed, who had been for ages the delight of angels—should now become the sorrowful, the acquaintance of grief, the bleeding and the dying! Smite upon your breasts, Believers and go your way! Beloved in the Lord, if such grief as this should be kindled in you, it will be well to pursue the subject and to reflect upon how unbelieving and how cruel we have been to Jesus since the day that we have known Him.

What? Does He bleed for me and have I doubted Him? Is He the Son of God and have I suspected His fidelity? Have I stood at the foot of the Cross unmoved? Have I spoken of my dying Lord in a cold, indifferent spirit? Have I ever preached Christ Crucified with a dry eye and a heart unmoved? Do I bow my knee in private prayer and are my thoughts wandering when they ought to be bound hand and foot to His dear bleeding self? Am I accustomed to turn over the pages of the Evangelists which record my Master's wondrous Sacrifice and have I never stained those pages with my tears? Have I never paused spellbound over the sacred sentence which recorded this miracle of miracles, this marvel of marvels?

Oh, shame upon you, hard Heart! Well may I strike you! May God strike you with the hammer of His Spirit and break you to shivers! O you stony Heart, you granite Soul, you flinty spirit—well may I strike the breast which harbors you, to think that I should be so doltish in the presence of love so amazing, so Divine! Brethren, you may strike upon your breasts as you look at the Cross and mourn that you should have done so little for your Lord. I think if anybody could have sketched my future life in the day of my conversion and have said, "You will be dull and cold in spiritual things and you will exhibit but little earnestness and little gratitude!" I should have said, like Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"

I suppose I read your hearts when I say that the most of you are disappointed with your own conduct as compared with your too-flattering prophecies of yourselves! What? Am I really pardoned? Am I in very deed washed in that warm stream which gushed from the riven side of Jesus, and yet am I not wholly consecrated to Christ? What? In my body do I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus and can I live almost without a thought of Him? Am I plucked like a brand from the burning and have I small care to win others from the wrath to come? Has Jesus stooped to win me

and do I not labor to win others for Him? Was He all in earnest about me and am I only half in earnest about Him? Dare I waste a minute, dare I trifle away an hour? Have I an evening to spend in vain gossip and idle frivolities?

O my Heart, well may I strike you, that at the sight of the death of the dear Lover of my soul, I should not be fired by the highest zeal and be impelled by the most ardent love to a perfect consecration of every power of my nature, every affection of my spirit, every faculty of my whole man! This mournful strain might be pursued to far greater lengths. We might follow up our confessions, still striking, still accusing, still regretting, still bewailing. We might continue upon the bass notes evermore and yet might we not express sufficient contrition for the shameful manner in which we have treated our blessed Friend. We might say with one of our hymn writers—

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin, And after none but You. And then I would—O that I might A constant weeper be!"

One might desire to become a Niobe and realize the desire of Jeremy, "O that my head were waters." Even the holy extravagance of George Herbert does not surprise us, for we would even sing with him the song of GRIEF—

"Oh, who will give me tears? Come, all you springs, Dwell in my head and eyes! Come, clouds and rain! My grief has need of all The watery things That nature has produced. Let every vein Suck up a river to supply my 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. What are two shallow fords, two little spouts Of a less world? The greater is but small. A narrow cupboard for my griefs and doubts, Which need provision in the midst of all. Verses, you are too fine a thing, too wise, For my rough sorrows. Cease! Be dumb and mute. Give up your feet and running to my eyes, And keep your measures for some lover's lute, Whose grief allows him music and a rhyme For mine excludes both measure, tune and time, Alas, my God!"

III. Having, perhaps, said enough on this point—enough if God blesses it—too much if without His blessing—let me invite you, in the third place, to remember that AT CALVARY, DOLOROUS NOTES ARE NOT THE ONLY SUITABLE MUSIC. We admired our poet when, in the hymn which we have just sung, he appears to question with himself which would be the most fitting tune for Golgotha. "It is finished"—shall we raise songs of sorrow or of praise? Mourn to see the Savior die, or proclaim His victory?—

"If of Calvary we tell, How can songs of triumph swell! If of man redeemed from woe, How shall notes of mourning flow?"

He shows that since our sin pierced the side of Jesus, there is cause for unlimited lamentation, but since the blood which flowed from the wound has cleansed our sin, there is ground for unbounded thanksgiving! And, therefore, the poet, after having balanced the matter in a few verses, concludes with—

" 'It is finished,' let us raise Songs of thankfulness and praise."

After all, you and I are not in the same condition as the multitude who had surrounded Calvary—for at that time our Lord was still dead—now He is risen, indeed! There were yet three days from that Thursday evening (for there is much reason to believe that our Lord was not

crucified on Friday), in which Jesus must dwell in the regions of the dead. Our Lord, therefore, so far as human eyes could see Him, was a proper object of pity and mourning and not of thanksgiving.

But now, Beloved, He ever lives and gloriously reigns! No grave confines that blessed body! He saw no corruption, for the moment when the third day dawned, He could no longer be held with the bonds of death, but He manifested Himself alive unto His disciples! He tarried in this world for 40 days. Some of His time was spent with those who knew Him in the flesh. Perhaps a larger part of it was passed with those saints who came out of their graves after His Resurrection, but certain it is that He is gone up, as the first-fruit from the dead. He is gone up to the right hand of God, even the Father!

Do not bewail those wounds—they are lustrous with supernal splendor! Do not lament His death—He lives no more to die! Do not mourn that shame and spitting—

"The head that once was crowned with thorns, Is crowned with glory now."

Look up and thank God that death has no more dominion over Him. He ever lives to make intercession for us and He shall shortly come with angelic bands surrounding Him to judge the quick and the dead. The argument for joy overshadows the reason for sorrow! Like as a woman when the child is born remembers no more her anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world, so, in the thought of the risen Savior who has taken possession of His crown, we will forget the lamentation of the Cross and the sorrows of the broken heart of Calvary.

Moreover, hear the shrill voice of the high sounding cymbals and let your hearts rejoice within you, for in His death our Redeemer conquered all the hosts of Hell. They came against Him furiously, yes, they came against Him to eat up His flesh, but they stumbled and fell. They compassed Him about, yes, they compassed Him about like bees, but in the name of the Lord did the Champion destroy them! Against the whole multitude of sins and all the battalions of the Pit, the Savior stood, a solitary soldier fighting against innumerable bands but He has slain them all! "Bruised is the dragon's head." Jesus has led captivity captive! He conquered when He fell! And let the notes of victory drown forever the cries of sorrow!

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, let it be remembered that men have been saved! Let there stream before your gladdened eyes this morning the innumerable company of the elect. Robed in white they come in long procession—they come from distant lands, from every clime. They were once scarlet with sin and black with iniquity—they are now all white and pure, and without spot before the Throne forever. They are beyond temptation, beatified and made like Jesus! And how? It was all through Calvary. There was their sin put away! There was their everlasting righteousness brought in and consummated! Let the hosts that are before the Throne, as they wave their palms and touch their golden harps, excite you to a joy like their own and let that celestial music hush the gentler voices which mournfully exclaim—

"Alas, and did my Savior bleed? And did my Sovereign die? Would He devote that sacred head For such a worm as I?"

Nor is that all. You yourself are saved! O Brother! This will always be one of your greatest joys, that others are converted through your instrumentality! This is occasion for much thanksgiving, but

your Savior's advice to you is, "Notwithstanding in this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." You, a spirit meet to be cast away! You whose portion must have been with devils—you are this day forgiven, adopted, saved, on the road to Heaven! Oh, while you think that you are saved from Hell, that you are lifted up to Glory, you cannot but rejoice that your sin is put away from you through the death of Jesus Christ, your Lord!

Lastly, there is one thing for which we ought always to remember with joy, Christ's death, and that is that although the crucifixion of Jesus was intended to be a blow at the honor and glory of our God—though in the death of Christ the world did, so far as it was able, put God Himself to death and so earn for itself that hideous title, "a deicidal world," yet never did God have such honor and glory as He obtained through the sufferings of Jesus! Oh, they thought to scorn Him, but they lifted His name on high!

They thought that God was dishonored when He was most glorified! The image of the Invisible, had they not marred it? The express image of the Father's Person, had they not defiled it? Ah, so they said! But He that sits in the heavens may well laugh and have them in derision, for what did they do?! They did but break the alabaster box and all the blessed drops of infinite mercy streamed forth to perfume all worlds! They did but rend the veil and then the Glory which had been hidden between the cherubim shone forth upon all lands!

O Nature, adoring God with your ancient and priestly mountains, extolling Him with your trees which clap their hands, and worshipping with your seas which, in their fullness, roar out Jehovah's praise! With all your tempests and flames of fire, your dragons and your deeps, your snow and your hail—you cannot glorify God as Jesus glorified Him when He became obedient unto death! O Heaven, with all your jubilant angels, your everchanting cherubim and seraphim, your thrice holy hymns, your streets of gold and endless harmonies—you cannot reveal the Deity as Jesus Christ revealed it on the Cross!

O Hell, with all your infinite horrors and flames unquenchable and pains and griefs and shrieks of tortured ghosts! Even you cannot reveal the Justice of God as Christ revealed it in His riven heart upon the bloody Cross! O earth and Heaven and Hell! O time and eternity, things present and things to come, visible and invisible—you are dim mirrors of the Godhead compared with the bleeding Lamb! O heart of God, I see you nowhere as at Golgotha, where the Word Incarnate reveals the justice and the love, the holiness and the tenderness of God in one blaze of Glory! If any created mind would gladly see the Glory of God, he need not gaze upon the starry skies, nor soar into the Heaven of heavens! He has but to bow at the foot of the Cross and watch the crimson streams which gush from Emmanuel's wounds!

If you would behold the Glory of God, you need not gaze between the gates of pearls! You have but to look beyond the gates of Jerusalem and see the Prince of Peace expire! If you would receive the most noble conception that ever filled the human mind of the loving kindness and the greatness and the pity, and yet the justice and the severity and the wrath of God, you need not lift up your eyes, nor cast them down, nor look to Paradise, nor gaze on Tophet—you have but to look into the heart of Christ all crushed and broken and bruised and you have seen it all!

Oh, the joy that springs from the fact that God has triumphed after all! Death is not the victor! Evil is not master! There are not two rival kingdoms, one governed by the God of good and the other by the god of evil— no, evil is bound, chained and led captive! Its sinews are cut, its head is broken! Its king is bound to the dread chariot of Jehovah-Jesus, and as the white horses of triumph drag the Conqueror up the everlasting hills in splendor of glory, the monsters of the Pit cringe at His chariot wheels!

Therefore, Beloved, we close this discourse with this sentence of humble yet joyful worship, "Glory be unto the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 23:27-56.

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Chapter 42

Luke 24,5 #3397 - A Timely Expostulation

A TIMELY EXPOSTULATION

NO. 3397

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Why seek you the living among the dead"

Luke 24:5.

This question was addressed to certain holy women who came early to the sepulcher, bringing with them the spices which they had prepared for embalming the body of our Lord. They were met by angels who reminded them that their Lord had promised to rise again, that He had so risen and that it was in vain for them to seek in the sepulcher the living, the Immortal Christ. "Why seek you the living among the dead?"

The mistake they made was that of seeking for the living Savior where He could not be found. We have, all of us, made the same mistake. Some of us are making it now. We are seeking good things in the midst of evil— hoping to find satisfaction where it was never yet discovered and never will be! Seeking, but seeking in the wrong place—seeking for the living among the dead.

To illustrate this, I shall first address myself to the people of God who sometimes fall into this error. And then I shall have to expostulate with the unconverted, as well as with those who are somewhat awakened to spiritual Truth. Say, now—

I. YOU CHILDREN OF GOD, CALLED OUT FROM THE WORLD, do you not sometimes set your affections upon things on the earth and seek for satisfaction here below? Have I not observed how some of you have tried to find comfort in your wealth and how others, in the midst of your successful efforts to extend your business, have thought to find solace on that bed of thorns, the cares of this world and the merchandise thereof? Ah, how grievous it is when the Christian becomes an idolater! Yet just as the Israelites of old—who, though they knew the true God, were found in an emergency setting up the golden calf and saying, "These are your gods, O Israel"—so, in one form or another, we may be making some created good the object of our search, setting our heart upon it and indulging expectations of solace from it—forgetting that comfort can only be found in our Lord Jesus Christ! "Why seek you"—why do you who know so much better—"why seek YOU the living among the dead?" Why do you come to the broken cistern which can hold no water, when the well springing up with crystal streams is always at your feet? Why will you go to drink of the muddy river, the Sihor, when the clear sparkling rill of the Water of Life is always

accessible to you? You did once try to fill your belly with the husks which the swine eat, but you failed to appease the hunger that consumed you. Why return to that unprofitable employment? Oh, Christian, you have sometimes said to your fellow man, "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?" I may say the same to you, if you think an immortal mind can be satisfied with mortal joys, or imagine that one who has been born from on high can ever find contentment in this poor wilderness world! The pursuit itself is a folly which is sure to bring you a strong rebuke whenever you thus fall into the error of seeking the living among the dead. Your solid comfort, your real happiness and the only joy worth having—you must find in Christ Jesus, by the power of the Spirit—and not in the things of time.

It is sadder, still, and this sometimes occurs when the professor tries to cheer his heart by the silly vanities of worldly amusement. There are a thousand inlets to happiness which you may look upon as free to your use—you are as welcome to enjoy them as other men. Whatever it is that is pure and lovely and uncorrupted with sin is as much yours as it is the portion of any other people under the sun. Yours are the beauties of Nature, the wonders of God's handiwork and the vast domain of Creation wherein are things innumerable to please the eye, to charm the ear and make the heart to heave with joy! Learn to use without abusing the bounties which Providence has placed within your reach! And pray that the delights they are capable of yielding may be sanctified to your good. But there are sundry amusements, so frivolous and trifling, that if they are not, in themselves sinful, they verge upon that border where diversion is separated from dissipation by only a faint line. And as the border is always the most infested by thieves and robbers, it is well to beware of it. If the Christian wants to be clear from open transgression, let him eschew the place of temptation and avoid the appearance of evil—for whatever is not of faith is sin. What you cannot do with a clear conscience that it is right, let that alone with a wholesome fear of offense. You can peril no mistake by leaving it! You may cause yourself a thousand sorrows by entering upon it. Oh, shall you that have once leaned your heads upon the bosom of Christ profane your hearts with this wanton wicked world? Shall you that have once eaten angels' food hanker after the diet of fools and drink the intoxicating wine cup of their pleasures? Shall you be seen in the assembly where none congregate but the lightest of the light, and the gayest of the gay? Shame upon you, Christian! You have disgraced your profession. You have disgraced yourself. You are seeking the living, not only among the dead, but among the rotten and corrupt! Do you expect cheer for your passions? You shall find a scourge for your soul! If you are a child of God, you shall be driven back to the way you have strayed from with many a smarting sore and many a broken bone! If you are not a child of God, likely enough you will go from bad to worse, give up the profession which was but a vapor, and turn as a dog to his own vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire! Thus, Christian, while I say to you, do not seek lasting comfort in earthly things, I am compelled to say to some who bear the name and wear the profession of Christians—do not seek your joy at all among the unprofitable sports and gambols in which some men delight! It is seeking the living among the dead!

Further, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, there is an evil very common to the most conscientious of those who avoid all forms of outward sin. It is the insidious evil of seeking comfort when they are full of doubts and fears, by looking within yourselves. I should think that experience might have cured us of this, for when we look into our own hearts—although I trust the Grace of God is there—so much of imperfection, of infirmity, yes, and what is worse, of real iniquity is

apparent, that a sight of the inner man is anything but likely to inspire us with consolation. What a fool is he who tries to fetch fire out of ice! But he is not much more foolish than those who try to soothe their anxieties by parleying with their feelings. Brothers and Sisters, the Christian's comfort is on the Cross. There hangs his hope! His hope must not be based or bottomed on anything he feels. It is pleasant to know that Grace reigns in one's breast. Be thankful for it. But, alas, if that is your confidence, the next day you may doubt whether there is any Grace within! And where, then, is your confidence? It is gone! It flees as a shadow. If, however, you live depending upon the Cross of Jesus, you can walk with equable comfort at all times, for the Cross never shifts its place, the Atonement never fluctuates, it never rises or falls in value! Our union with Christ is not subject to degrees. We are always in Him accepted in the Beloved. Happy is the man who builds on that solid Rock and not upon the treacherous quicksands of his own personal emotions! If you endeavor to draw comfort from your fickle, changeable feelings, you seek for the living among the dead. You are looking for joy where it can never be found. You will gather the thorn, but not the rose. You will endure the labor, but not receive the reward. You will suffer the burning of the fire, but not be enlivened by its cheerful warmth. "Why seek you the living among the dead?"

When the Believer feels that Grace is at a very low ebb with him, let him take care that he does not resort to Sinai for the refreshment of his evidences. Have you not heard of some Believers whose mournful sonnet has been—

"'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?"

And in order to get out of that state they have said, "Now I will make a Covenant with God. I will chasten myself with fasting and much prayer." Or they have had recourse to vows of their own devising, instead of going straight away to Christ as sinners—with some such language on their lips as our hymn suggests—

"Just as I am, though tossed about, With many a conflict, many a doubt, Fighting within, and fears without, Oh, Lamb of God. I come!"

Volume 60 3Instead of thus going to Christ, they set to work to be their own Savior! If Paul were here, he would say to them, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh?" Beloved Brothers and Sisters, make your Covenant if you like, and fast if you please, and pray if you can without ceasing—the more you pray the better. But when a soul is hungry, it will not recover itself by bodily exercises, but by feeding! So what you need is not so much to give out something from yourselves as to get something into yourselves through Christ! And therefore, turn your eyes, as you did at the first, to the wounds, the glorious wounds, of your Substitute, and say to Him, "My Lord, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner. If I am not saved, yet will I trust in You, now, even though I never did before. I now cast myself on You." This will revive you, this will comfort you! You may set to work as you please after that, but do not seek for the living among the dead! Do not go to Moses, who is dead and was buried years ago! Do not bring yourself under the spirit of bondage, but come as a child who is not under the Law, but under Grace—and rest at the foot of the Cross! So shall you have your spiritual vigor restored and rejoice in the Lord your God!

Once more to the Believer. I do think, dear Friends, we seek for the living among the dead when we look to our fellow men to find in them some succor or support to depend upon, or when, as the case may vary, we look to our dear children or relatives and think to find a perpetuity of comfort there. Ah, and it is very easy for some of you to think too highly of the minister. It is possible when you have received spiritual quickening and have come to be fed under some godly pastor, that you may look no higher than the man, instead of looking to his Master! If so, if your faith stands in the wisdom of man, or in man's earnestness—you are looking for the living among the dead! Oh, beware of anything like that! Let us be held in respect by you for our office's sake, but nothing beyond this do we crave or counsel. To the Lord Jesus we bid you look, for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake! A more common evil, however, is for the wife to feel as if her husband could never be taken from her side. But he is mortal. I would not distress you with dreary forebodings, but I would have you remember that the living God is the only living One on whom your trust can be fixed. And you, Mother, do you think that your child can never be removed? Know, then, that you are in the land of the dying, and who are you, and what are you, that they should be beyond the reach of the arrows that fly abroad, and the diseases that work insidiously, any more than the children and the friends of others? Oh, if you begin to build your nest in these trees, which have, every one of them, been marked by the woodman's axe—and must all come down—you are a silly bird, and your nest will be lost, and yourself suffer grievous damage! There is one Immortal Lover who shall never die! There is one Eternal Friend who shall never depart! There is a Father who always lives! There is a Brother who sticks close forever! Earthly kinships—value them, but hold them loosely. Thank God for them, but think not that they are your freeholds. Your tenure is but on lease and a word shall suffice to terminate it! Walking through the fields, you might see most of them still yellow with the king-cups and blushing with all the flowers of this sweet summer month of June, but do not think these flowers shall long abide, for already I hear the sound of the sharpening scythe and I know the mowers will soon be at their task—the flowers will be cut down and the green grass shall be dry. Set not, then, your love on the fleeting bounties of kindly Providence as though you could embalm them and make them last for years! "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever." Fix your love on that which is constant—not on these transient things! I leave you, my Brothers and Sisters, with the general maxim—having applied it in various ways, you can apply it to many more in your meditations—take heed lest you seek for the living among the dead, and so spend your strength for nothing and reap the bitter fruits of weariness and disappointment! Are there not, however, among you, my Hearers, full many of—

II. THOSE WHO ARE NOT THE CHILDREN OF GOD? As the Apostle said in that 10th Chapter of Romans which we just now read to you, "They have not all obeyed the Gospel." I do not know whether the reading of that Chapter touched any of your hearts. It did mine. I could scarcely help weeping as I thought of some of you. "They have not all obeyed the Gospel"—I mean not all those who sit in these seats regularly, to whom we preach that Gospel so frequently. Those who come into our classes are earnestly taught, but they have not all obeyed the Gospel. No, there is a very large proportion who have not. Oh, grievous fact—fact which some of you will have to grieve over with terrible remorse in the Day of Judgment, unless the mercy of God prevents it! It is with you I want to expostulate. Some of you are seeking for joy in sin and you are seeking for the living among the dead, indeed!

Be thoughtful for a moment. God who made you has made certain laws, the observance of which is essential to your well-being. Suppose God had ordained that the violation of His law should make men happy, would that be wise? It is too unwise a thought for us to entertain, much less for God to design! You are disobeying God's command—then depend upon it that is the way of unhappiness! It must be so. "Oh," you say, "but it gives me present gratification." That may be. It is quite consistent with what I have said because the enchantment that allures you is the very snare that beguiles you—and then for every ounce of joy which sin can yield to a sinful spirit, there will be a ton of sorrow inflicted! I forbear in this place to mention the sins of the flesh but who does not know that for every snap of pleasure derived from indulgence of the passions, there are racks, tortures and agonies which the physician could better explain than myself. Such a measure of retribution is common in this life, but as for the life to come—could you lift for a moment the thick veil that hides the unseen world from our gaze, or could a sound pierce through the

Volume 60 5partition that Infinite Mercy has made too stout for the wailing and gnashing of teeth to penetrate—I think the groans, the execrations, the shrieks of madness of those who lived as votaries and died as victims of the so-called pleasure of sin would fill you with horror and wild amazement! The transgressor who eats the fruit of his own ways, fruit that once tempted his appetite—and drinks the dregs of that wine cup, the first sip of which was so sweet to his taste—is an appalling spectacle! And this is merely the awakening of a man's conscience to his folly. The punishment of avenging Justice is in reserve! Disobedience of God must be punished by God with indignation that does not relent and pain that knows no abatement! Why seek you, then, the living among the dead?

A moment's reflection might convince a man that this final scene inevitably awaits the profligate. Who would think of making his child happy in the way of constant disobedience, or of encouraging his waywardness by rewarding it? You take care, as judicious parents, that your children shall know you govern the house. And if your laws are constantly broken, you exact the penalty and the rod is put into use—or at least the chastisement is not spared. And shall not God stand up for His Sovereign prerogative, enforce His own Law and make men feel that they cannot violate that Law without suffering the retribution He has threatened? You shall find it so to your cost if you will not credit it to your escape! I tell you that if you seek your pleasure in the theater, or in the saloon of gaiety, or in what is infinitely worse, though too often in close association—in the house of shame. If you go to the chamber of the strange woman, or spend your evenings in the tavern, inflaming yourselves with strong drink, you court misery while you try to avoid melancholy! You render yourselves incapable of happiness while you strive to be merry! But ah, you might as well deliberately make a pilgrimage to the depths of Hell in quest of the joys of Heaven as to seek true enjoyment in the haunts of vice! The Lord, the Lord of Hosts will make men see that beneath the fair skin of the world's pleasures there is a loathsome leprosy that would make them heart-sick were the latent corruption exposed! Oh, go not after such pleasures! Remember that God will require these things at your hands. Seek true pleasure, mental pleasure that never sours! Seek pure joy which will retain its fragrance, refresh others besides yourself, haunt you with no hideous ghosts, but bear sweet reflection when you come to die! Cheer your hearts with draughts from that goblet which will invigorate you when your soul's pulse is beating—the cup which flows clear to the last, whereof you may be grateful to sip when your immortal spirit is about to wing its fight to worlds unknown! Seek not for living pleasure amidst the graves and charnel houses of sin!

Let me change my tone again, for now I come to address a part of this company of people—

III. THOSE WHO ARE ANXIOUSLY CONCERNED TO BE FOUND RIGHT WITH GOD.

Some of you, dear Friends, have known the evil of sin and have turned from its evil ways. But though you are desirous of being saved from the wrath to come, you are very likely seeking salvation where it is not to be obtained. A few counsels and cautions may, therefore, be welcome to you.

Do not seek salvation by rites and ceremonies, for if you do, you are seeking for the living among the dead! The old Jewish religion was full of types—hence the forms and ceremonials that abounded in its observance—but it did not save multitudes who in the wilderness perished in their sins! And hundreds of thousands more, who had seen it all their lifetime, but never seen through its externals the realities it prefigured, died rejecting the Lord Jesus, to whose mediation it bears witness. Outward pomp and ceremony are of no avail to save the soul! Would those who are as fond of vestments and rituals try the experiment of endeavoring to heal a man who was sick by such means, they would find their medicines have no effect upon the body to restore its health. And were they to bring in a man who was sick in soul, they would soon find that all their gaudy trappings and rhythmical intonations were incapable of supplying balm to a wounded conscience! They are dead, Sirs. They are dead, every one of them! The whole thing is death! It is nothing in all its beauty but the festering fungus that grows upon corruption. The whole system is trickery—a gewgaw to deceive. It is nothing but imposture, an artifice of Satan to lead the world astray! Were you baptized with water from the river Jordan, confirmed with never so much pomp and took the sacrament, or, as they say, "went to celebration" on every holy day and every unholy day likewise—and were you to expire with unction on your face and with the priest's lying absolution in your ears—you would go down to Hell despite it all, if you had no truer faith, no brighter hope than these things could inspire! For other salvation is there none but that which you can find in Christ, without any priest to mediate, or any minister to intervene between you and Him. You are a priest, yourself, if you believe in Jesus. Christ is the one only Priest, the Great High Priest of our profession! Get pardon from Him and let other men buckle about their priesthood and vaunt their succession as they may. Beware of them! To resort to these men for help is to seek the living among the dead!

Or, perhaps, you will go about to work out your own salvation apart from Christ. You have got the idea that you must pass through so much experience, weep so many tears, get into such-and-such a state of heart—and then that you must reform this habit and perform that service—and after awhile you will be saved and obtain peace. The top and bottom of it is, you think you can save yourself! You would be your own Savior! Do you not know that every man, according to God's own Word, every man is accursed who does not keep the whole Law, "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them." Now, as you have not kept all things, you must be accursed! And as long as you abide under the Law, you are accursed in all that you do! If you can be delivered from the Law through Christ, then, and only then, may you escape from the curse, for Christ was made a

Volume 60 7curse for us by hanging upon the Cross for us—and so the curse is put away and so we are redeemed there from. But so long as you are trying to be saved by your own works, you are under the Law. And so long as you are under the Law, you are under the curse. To try to find a

blessing where everything is under God's Law, is seeking for the living among the dead!

I know not to whom these remarks may pointedly apply, but I dare say I am speaking to some of you who pant for salvation and you would give anything to be assured of your soul's acceptance! You have been praying, it may be, night and day for mercy till your knees seem as though they would grow to the floor. In your earnest pleadings your heart has been vehement till the flesh has grown faint. I am glad that you are pleading and agonizing in prayer, but there is no necessity for these long delays and for these protracted prayers. Trust Christ, who hangs on yonder Cross, and you are saved! The moment you depend upon Jesus, past sin is blotted out, you are a new man as in the sight of God, your iniquity is forgiven, your transgression is covered and you are accepted in the Beloved! Hundreds of times have I tried to bring forward this theme till I sometimes fear lest it should sound flat and fail to awaken you! Yet some of you have not believed it or received it! Yet I bear you witness that if you receive not this cardinal Truth of God, you must perish in your sin! Our Lord did not mince matters. He offered no three courses, but He said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." What about those that believe not? He said, "He that believes not shall be damned." What if the man always goes to Church, or always comes to a meeting? There is no exemption—if he believe not, he shall be damned. But what if he always pays twenty shillings in the pound and is scrupulously honest? "He that believes not shall be damned." The gentle lips of the Savior spoke these words! They are not of my coining, they are not my construction. He said it and will prove it true. Oh, that you might trust Him, for if you trust Him, you cannot be condemned! But if you go about anywhere else to find hope and comfort for your soul, you are seeking for the living among the dead! Why continue this foolish search? Why persevere in this bootless toil?

Yet it is very possible you are seeking for some good thing in yourself by way of feeling and emotion. "If I felt a more broken heart," says one, "I could trust Christ." "If," says another, "I felt the terrors of the Law, I could trust Christ." If! Yes, indeed! Why multiply your useless "ifs"? They are vain excuses. Do you mean you cannot trust Christ? That is a sad, though, perhaps, it is an honest confession. Do you not believe Him to be true? "Ah," says one, "I do believe that." Is it difficult, then, to trust an honest man? But you do not believe in the integrity and faithfulness of Christ! "Oh," you say, "but I do." Well, then, trust Him as the necessary consequence! Jesus Christ says that He came into the world to save sinners. And God's witness is that if we trust Christ, we shall be saved. If you believe that to be true, trust Him! Commit your soul and your soul's salvation to Him! "Oh, but I am not fit." Is there a word about fitness in the whole Gospel? As you may have come fresh from the commission of some new sin, the Gospel does not say to you, "Stand by a while, till you are prepared." But it says, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." I do not find the Gospel telling you that you must first be better, but it is said that you are now to turn to Him. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Oh, I wish you could take my Master at His word! I wish, poor guilty One, you would have done with disputing, cling to the promises and just drop into the arms of the Promiser! Can you venture thus? You shall never chide yourself for temerity, or repent of your courage! It may seem a daring thing to do, but come, and welcome! Jesus casts out none that come!

When I came—and it seems fresh in my memory tonight as I mention it to you—I came all trembling in my sin. I knew I had not one good thing that could recommend me to Christ. I thought He would have said, "Go your way, I have not loved you, nor given Myself for you." But I did look

to Him. I knew I had no other confidence. I did cast myself upon Him and He has not cast me away. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." I cannot lead you to Christ—oh, that I could! There is One far mightier who can and I hope that He will do it tonight! We spoke this morning about the Holy Spirit. Oh, that the Holy Spirit might prove His own power to you now! At any rate, this I can say and this I do say— Give up that seeking your own righteousness! Give up that struggling after emotions and feeling! It is all seeking the living among the dead! The idea of your helping Christ to save you is preposterous! What could you do? As well yoke a snail with a racehorse, that they might win a prize, as for you to help Christ! You, help Christ? You, with your rags and Christ with His white linen? You, with your pollution and Christ with His holiness? You, with your deep condemnation and Christ with His free forgiveness? He needs no help from you! He wants your emptiness, not your fullness—your weakness, not your power—your death, not your life! When a tree is loaded, it needs baskets, but it does not need full baskets—it needs empty baskets to hold the fruit. And Jesus Christ wants sinners—not sinners having merits—a foolish pretense—but sinners who are destitute! There is a full Christ for empty sinners, an allbountiful Christ for you, famished Sinner, now!

Ah, some of you poor people drop in here, sometimes, on an evening, and I am glad to see you. Never be ashamed to come in your working clothes. I know you think I am not talking to you, but you are the very people I am speaking to! Jesus Christ always had a kind word for the laboring man—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now, it is likely enough some of you are no better than you should be, though you have stepped in here in the crowd to hear a word. Well, it is such as you are, Christ came to save. "Not the righteous. Sinners, Jesus came to save." Oh, you chief of sinners! Come

Volume 60 9to Jesus Christ! This night He will receive every soul that comes to Him. Eternal Spirit draw them! Eternal Father, now call them by Your power and let us meet at Your right hand, everyone of us, to see Your face and rejoice in Your mighty love!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Romans 9:1-5; Romans 10:1-21.

Verses 1-3. I tell the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I, myself, were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. The Apostle is evidently about to make an extraordinary statement—a statement which would probably not be believed and, therefore, he gives as a preface the most solemn assertions that are permitted to Christian men declaring that he is speaking the truth, and also that the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with his conscience that it is so—that he so loves the souls of his fellow countrymen that, though the thing could never be, yet in a sort of ecstasy of love, he could devote himself to anything so long as his countrymen might but be saved. "My kinsmen according to the flesh."

4, 5. Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises: Whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God forever. Amen.

The Apostle never omits an opportunity of magnifying his Master! Though it did not seem to be called for by the immediate subject in hand, yet he must put in a doxology to the name of Jesus. "Who is over all the eternally blessed God forever. Amen." How any Believers in Scripture ever get to be disbelievers in the Deity of Christ is altogether astounding! If there is anything taught in the Word of God, it is assuredly that Paul comforts himself, in a measure, by the Doctrine of Election which is fully spoken to in this Chapter. My subject leads me to read again at the 10th Chapter.

Romans 10:1-21.

Verse 1. Brethren my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. The same thing over again—his deep concern for his countrymen.

2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. Zeal is a good thing, but like the horse without a bit, it becomes useless and even dangerous. Knowledge is the bridle in the mouth of zeal. Zeal is like fire which may burn the house which it was intended to warm unless it is carefully governed. There must be knowledge in zeal.

3. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. This is a great evil in the present day. There are many persons who are evidently zealous for God, but they make a mistake in supposing that they are to be saved by their own works, their prayers, their Church attendance, their Chapel attendance, or something of the sort, instead of accepting the finished righteousness of Christ, which is the righteousness of God! They are insulting Christ. They are insulting God by thinking that He would have given His Son to be our Righteousness if we could have made a righteousness of our own, or given Him up to die, if we could save ourselves.

4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. There is the point—to believe—to have faith. It is that which gives us the righteousness of which Christ is the sum total.

5. For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law. That the man which does those things shall live by them. And if any man did, or could keep the Law of God, he would live by it—but no man has ever done so, or ever will. There is no hope of life by the Law.

6-9. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not, in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach: That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. What a wondrous way of salvation—so near—so close to us! What an expression that is—"in your mouth." We must absolutely take it out of our mouths. God has put the Bread of Life so near to us that it is in our mouth! We must reject it as a man would reject food, if we perish! But, oh, for Grace to receive it, to live upon it, to believe Christ, to trust Him and so to be saved!

10, 11. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. If, then, I base my eternal salvation upon Christ, and am trusting in Him—not in my works, or prayers,

or tears, or alms, or feelings, or even in my own repentance or faith—but wholly in Him, I shall never be ashamed!

12, 13. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. What a comforting text for some of you! You want salvation, but you are afraid you cannot find it. "Whoever"—what a grand word—"whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord"—that is to say in prayer, but that prayer the prayer of faith—he "shall be saved."

14. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? That is the point—the believing is the vital matter!

14, 15. And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things. You see all the machinery of salvation here. God provides a Gospel, He sends a preacher to proclaim it, men hear it—by the Holy Spirit they be

Volume 60 11 lieve it and they are saved. It is all in a nutshell, but oh, how blessedly suited to poor, unworthy sinners like ourselves!

16, 17. But they have not all obeyed the Gospel . For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. It does not ever come by seeing. Faith does not come by looking upon ceremonies—by gazing upon processions and pompous rituals! It come by the simple hearing of the Word of God. It is a matter of the understanding and the work of the Holy Spirit upon that understanding. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

18, 19. But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? Were they not taught that God would reject them if they were disbelievers? And that He would call in the heathen? Yes, they knew it, for—

19. First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people and by a foolish nation I will anger you. And the heathen thus, like ourselves, were accounted dogs by the Jews, but the Lord has brought us in and made us to believe in Christ because they rejected Him! What a wonderful passage that is about the great supper which the King made, when we read, because the invited guests did not come, the King, being angry, said unto His servants, "Go you out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Even the anger of God, you see, works good to some! He was angry with the guests that did not come, but then He called us in! His anger against the Jewish people has turned to the salvation of the Gentiles, for which may God be praised! But, may Israel be gathered, too!

20, 21 But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not: I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 24,5-6 #1106 - The Lord Is Risen-Indeed

"THE LORD IS RISEN, INDEED"

NO. 1106

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1873,

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!

Remember how He spoke unto you when He was yet in Galilee."

Luke 24:5-6.

THE first day of the week commemorates the Resurrection of Christ and, following Apostolic example, we have made the first day of the week to be our Sabbath. Does not this intimate to us that the rest of our souls is to be found in the resurrection of our Savior? Is it not true that a clear understanding of the rising again of our Lord is, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very surest means of bringing our minds into peace? To have a part in the Resurrection of Christ is to enjoy that Sabbath which remains for the people of God. We who have believed in the risen Lord do enter into rest, even as He also, Himself, is resting at the right hand of the Father. In Him we rest because His work is finished, His Resurrection being the pledge that He has perfected all that is necessary for the salvation of His people and we are complete in Him.

I trust, this morning, that some restful thoughts may, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be sown in the minds of Believers while we make a pilgrimage to the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and see the place where the Lord lay.

I. And, first, this morning, I will speak to you upon certain INSTRUCTIVE MEMORIES which gather around the place where Jesus slept "with the rich in His death." Though He is not there, He assuredly once was there, for "He was crucified, dead, and buried." He was as dead as the dead now are and though He could see no corruption, nor could be held by the bands of death beyond the predestined time, yet He was in very deed most assuredly dead. No light remained in His eyes, no life in His heart. Thought had fled from His thorn-crowned brow and speech from His golden mouth. He was not, in mere appearance, but in reality dead— the spear-thrust decided that question once and for all.

Therefore in the sepulcher they laid Him, a dead Man, fit occupant of the silent tomb. Yet as He is not there now, but is risen, it is for us to search for memorials of His having been there. Not for the "holy sepulcher" will we contend with superstitious sectaries, but in spirit we will gather up the precious relics of the risen Redeemer. First, He has left in the grave the spices. When He rose He did not bring away the costly aromatics in which His body had been wrapped, but He left them

there. Joseph brought about one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, and the odor remained. In the sweetest spiritual sense, our Lord Jesus has filled the grave with fragrance. It no longer smells of corruption and foul decay, but we can sing with the poet of the sanctuary— "Why should we tremble to convey

These bodies to the tomb? There the dear flesh of Jesus lay, And left a long perfume."

Yonder lowly bed in the earth is now perfumed with costly spices and decked with sweet flowers, for on its pillow the truest Friend we have once laid His holy head! We will not start back with horror from the chambers of the dead, for the Lord, Himself, has traversed them—and where He goes no terror abides. The Master also left His grave clothes behind Him. He did not come from the tomb wrapped about with a winding-sheet. He did not wear the burial clothes of the tomb as the garments of life, but when Peter went into the sepulcher he saw the grave clothes lying carefully folded by themselves. What if I say He left them to be the hangings of the royal bedchamber wherein His saints fall asleep?

See how He has curtained our last bed! Our dormitory is no longer bare and drear, like a prison cell, but hung around with fair white linen and comely tapestry—a chamber fit for the repose of princes of the blood! We will go to our last bedchamber in peace, because Christ has furnished it for us! Or if we change the metaphor, I may say that our Lord has left those grave clothes for us to look upon as pledges of His fellowship with us in our low estate and reminders that as He has cast aside the death garments, even so shall we. He has risen from His couch and left His sleeping robes behind Him in token that at our waking there are other vestures ready for us, also.

What if I again change the figure and say that as we have seen old tattered flags hung up in cathedrals and other national buildings as the memorials of defeated enemies and victories won, so in the crypt where Jesus vanquished death His grave clothes are hung up as the trophies of His victory over death, and as assurances to us that all His people shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved them? "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?" Then, carefully folded up and laid by itself, our Lord left the napkin that was about His head. Yonder lies that napkin now. The Lord needed it not when He came forth to life.

You who mourn may use it as a handkerchief with which to dry your eyes. You widows and you fatherless children—you mourning brothers and you weeping sisters—and you, you Rachels, who will not be comforted because your children are not here, take this which wrapped your Savior's face and wipe your tears away forever! The Lord is risen, indeed, and therefore thus says the Lord, "Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for they shall come again from the land of the enemy." "Your dead men shall live." O mourner—together with the Lord's dead body shall they arise! Why, sorrow not as they that are without hope, for if you believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they, also, which sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with Him!

What else has the risen Savior left behind Him? Our faith has learned to gather up memorials sweet from the couch of our Lord's tranquil slumber. Well, Beloved, He left angels behind Him, and thus made the grave—

"A cell where angels use To come and go with heavenly news."

Angels were not in the tomb before, but, at His Resurrection, they descended! One rolled away the stone and others sat where the Body of Jesus had lain. They were the personal attendants and bodyguard of the Great Prince and, therefore, they attended Him at His rising, keeping the doorway and answering the enquiries of His friends. Angels are full of life and vigor, but they did not hesitate to assemble at the grave, gracing the Resurrection even as flowers adorn the spring!

I read not that our Master has ever recalled the angels from the sepulchers of His saints. And now, if Believers die as poor as Lazarus and as sick and as despised as he, angels shall convey their souls into the bosom of their Lord and their bodies, too, shall be watched by guardian spirits, as surely as Michael kept the body of Moses and contended for it with the foe. Angels are both the servitors of living saints and the custodians of their dust. What else did our Well-Beloved leave behind Him? He left an open passage from the tomb, for the stone was rolled away—doorless is that house of death! We shall, in our turn, if the Master comes not speedily, descend into the prison of the grave. What did I say?—I called it a "prison," but how can it be a prison—it has no bolts or bars!

How can it be a prison, that has not even a door to close upon its occupants? Our Samson has pulled up the posts and carried away the gates of the grave with all their bars! The key is taken from the belt of Death and is held in the hands of the Prince of Life! The broken signal and the fainting watchmen are tokens that the dungeons of death can no more confine their captives! As Peter, when he was visited by the angel, found his chains fall off him and iron gates opened to him of their own accord, so shall the saints find ready escape at the resurrection morning! They shall sleep awhile, each one in his resting place, but they shall rise readily, for the stone is rolled away!

A mighty angel rolled away the stone, for it was very great—and when he had done the deed he sat down upon the stone. His garment was white as snow and his face like lightning. And as he sat on the stone he seemed to say to Death and Hell, "Roll it back, again, if you can." "Who shall rebuild for the tyrant his prison? The scepter lies broken that fell from his hands. His dominion is ended—the Lord is arisen! The helpless shall soon be released from their bands." One thing else I venture to mention as left by my Lord in His forsaken tomb. I visited, some few months ago, several of the large grave vaults which are to be found outside the gates of Rome.

You enter a large square building, sunk in the earth, and descend by many steps. And as you descend you observe on the four walls of the great chamber, innumerable little pigeonholes in which are the ashes of tens of thousands of departed persons. Usually in front of each compartment prepared for the reception of the ashes stands a lamp. I have seen hundreds, if not thousands, of these lamps, but they are all unlit and, indeed, do not appear ever to have carried light. They shed no ray upon the darkness of death. But now our Lord has gone into the tomb and illuminated it with His Presence—"the lamp of His love is our guide through the gloom." Jesus has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel! And now in the dovecotes where Christians nestle, there is light—yes, in every cemetery there is a light which shall burn through the watches of earth's night till the day breaks and the shadows flee away—and the resurrection morn shall dawn! So, then, the empty tomb of the Savior leaves us many sweet reflections which we will treasure up for our instruction.

II. Our text expressly speaks of VAIN SEARCHES—"Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" There are places where seekers after Jesus should not expect to find

Him, however diligent may be their search, however sincere their desire. You cannot find a man where he is not, and there are some spots where Christ never will be discovered. At this present moment I see many searching for Christ among the monuments of ceremonialism, or what Paul called, "the weak and beggarly elements," for they, "observe days and months and times and years." Ever since our Lord arose, Judaism and every form of symbolic ceremony have become nothing better than sepulchers.

The types were of God's own ordaining, but when the Substance had come, the types became empty sepulchers and nothing more. Since that time men have invented other symbols which have not the sanction of Divine authority and are only dead men's graves. At this present period the world has gone mad after its idols, deluded and deceived by those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Surely there never was a period, even when Rome was most dominant, in which men heaped unto themselves ceremonies at such a rate as at the present day! They have made Christianity to be a greater yoke of bondage than was Judaism, itself—but in vain shall any sincere and awakened soul hope to find Jesus among these vain performances!

You may stumble from one holy day to another, and from one holy place to another, and from one hocus-pocus to another, but you shall not find a Savior in any of them, for thus has He Himself declared, "Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father, but the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him." Jesus has torn the veil and abolished ceremonial worship and yet men seek to revive it, building up the sepulchers which the Lord has broken down. This day He repeats in our ears the warning, "Take you good heed unto yourselves, for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spoke unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest you corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female."

Yet certain men among us go about to set up the altars which our godly forefathers broke down, and the work of Reformers and of Protestants must now be done over again! God send us a Knox or a Luther with a mighty hammer to break in pieces the idols which the priests of Baal are setting up! They seek the living among the dead! Jesus is not in their masses and processions! He is risen far above such carnal worship! If He were a dead Christ, such a worship might, perchance, be a suitable pageant over His tomb. But to one who always lives, it must be insulting to present such materialistic services!

Alas, there are many others who are seeking Christ as their Savior among the tombs of moral reformation! Our Lord likened the Pharisees to whitewashed sepulchers—inwardly they were full of dead men's bones, but outwardly they were fairly garnished. Oh, the way in which men, when they get uneasy about their souls, try to whitewash themselves! Some one gross sin is given up, not in heart, but only in appearance, and a certain virtue is cultivated, not in the soul, but only in the outward act—and thus they hope to be saved though they still remain enemies to God, lovers of sin and greedy seekers after the wages of unrighteousness! They hope that the clean outside of the cup and the platter will satisfy the Most High and that He will not be so severe as to look within and try their hearts.

O, Sirs, why do you seek the living among the dead? Many have sought peace for their consciences by their moral reforms—but if the Holy Spirit has truly convicted them of sin—they

have soon found that they were looking for a living Christ amidst the tombs. He is not there, for He is risen! If Christ were dead, we might well say to you, "Go and do your best to be your own saviors," but while Christ is alive, He needs no help of yours—He will save you from top to bottom, or not at all. He will be Alpha and Omega to you and if you put your hands upon His work and think in any way that you can help Him, you have dishonored His holy name—and He will have nothing to do with you! Seek not a living salvation among the sepulchers of outward formality.

Too many, also, are struggling to find the living Christ amidst the tombs which cluster so thickly at the foot of Sinai. They look for life by the Law, whose ministry is death. Men think that they are to be saved by keeping God's Commandments. They are to do their best and they conceive that their sincere endeavors will be accepted—and they will thus save themselves. This self-righteous idea is diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of the Gospel! The Gospel is not for you who can save yourselves, but for those who are lost! If you can save yourselves, go and do it, but do not mock the Savior with your hypocritical prayers! Go and stumble among the tombs of ancient Israel and perish as they did in the wilderness, for Moses and the Law can never lead you into rest.

The Gospel is for sinners who cannot keep the Law for themselves— who have broken it and incurred its penalty! The Gospel is for those who know that they have done so and confess it. For such, a living Savior has come that He may blot out their transgressions. Seek not salvation by the works of the Law, for by them shall no flesh living be justified. By the Law is the knowledge of sin and nothing more! Righteousness, peace, life, salvation come by faith in the living Lord Jesus Christ and by no other means! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," but if you go about to establish your own righteousness, you shall surely perish because you have rejected the righteousness of Christ.

There are others who seek the living Jesus among the tombs by looking for something good in human nature—in their own natural hearts and dispositions. I can see you now, for I have known you a long time and this has always been your folly—you will go into the morgue of your own nature and say, "Is Jesus here?" Beloved, you are sad and depressed and I do not wonder. Look at yonder dry bones and bleaching skeletons. See that heap of rottenness, that mass of corruption, that body of death—can you bear it? "Ah," you say, "I am a wretched man, indeed, but I long to find some good thing in my flesh!"

O Beloved, you search in vain! You might as well rake Hell over to find Heaven in it as look into your own carnal nature to find consolation! Behold this day, God has abandoned the old nature and given it up to death. Under the old Law, circumcision was the putting away of the filth of the flesh, as though after this filth were gone the flesh might perhaps be bettered, but now, under the New Covenant, we have a far deeper symbol, for, "know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we, also, should walk in newness of life." "The old man is buried as a dead thing out of which no good can come." "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin."

God does not attempt to renew the old carnal mind, but to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus. If any man continually practices introspeculation with a view to consolation, he might as well pile up blocks of Wenham ice with a view to burn down a city! If you are turning over your frames and

feelings, your thoughts and imaginations, to discover comfort, you might far sooner hope to find precious diamonds in the sweepings of the roads. "He is not here," says the whole of our old nature. He is not here, He is risen! And for consolation you must look alone to Him, as He is enthroned above the skies.

Yet again, too many have tried to find Christ amidst the gloomy catacombs of the world's philosophy. For instance, on Sunday they like to have a sermon full of thought—thought being, in the modern meaning of it, something beyond, if not opposite to, the simple teaching of the Bible. If a man tells his people what he finds in the Scriptures he is said to "talk platitudes." But if a man amuses his people with his own dreams, however opposed they may be to God's thoughts, he is a "thinking man," a "highly intellectual preacher." There are some who love, above all things, the maundering of daydreamers and the crudities of skeptics. If they can hear what an infidel Professor has said against Inspiration—if they can be indulged with the last new blasphemy—some hearers feel that they are making advances in that higher culture which is so much vaunted nowadays!

But, believe me, the bat-haunted caves of false philosophy and pretended science have been searched again and again, and salvation dwells not in them! In Paul's day there were Gnostics who tracked all the winding passages of vain-glorious learning, but they only discovered "another gospel which was not another." The world by wisdom knew not God. After roaming amid the dreary catacombs of philosophy, we come back to breathe the fresh air of the living Word and concerning the mazes of science, we gasp out the sentence—"He is not there." Reason has not found Him in her deepest mining, nor speculation in her highest soaring, though, indeed, He is not far from any one of us! Athens has her unknown God, but in the simple Gospel God is known in the Person of Jesus.

Socrates and Plato hold up their candles, but Jesus is the soul. Our moderns quibble and dispute and yet a living Christ is among us converting sinners, cheering saints and glorifying God! If the Lord were a dead question for debate, philosophy might help us. But as He is a living power, a grain of faith in Him is better than mountains of philosophy. O you who know not the inner life and the quickening Spirit, what have you to do with the risen Lord? As well might corruption's world become the judge of cherubim as you become the arbiters of the Truth of God concerning Jesus our Lord!

How anxiously do I wish that you who have been searching for salvation in any of these directions would give up the hopeless task and understand that Christ is near you—and if you, with the heart, believe on Him, and with the mouth confess Him, you shall be saved. "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside Me there is none else." This is His cry to you. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Jesus is still living and able to save to the uttermost! All you have to do is simply turn the glance of your faith towards Him—by that faith He becomes yours—and you are saved! But oh, seek not the living among the dead, for He is risen!

III. We will again change our strain and consider, in the third place, UNSUITABLE ABODES. The angels said to the women, "He is not here, but is risen!" As much as to say—since He is alive He does not abide here. The living Christ might have sat down in the tomb—He might have made the sepulcher His resting place—but it would not have been appropriate. And so He teaches us today

that Christians should dwell in places appropriate to them. You are risen in Christ—you ought not to dwell in the grave!

I shall now speak to those who, to all intents and purposes, live in the sepulcher though they are risen from the dead. Some of these are excellent people, but their temperament, and perhaps their mistaken convictions of duty, lead them to be perpetually gloomy and desponding. They hope they have believed in Christ, but they are not sure. They trust that they are saved, but they would not be presumptuous enough to say so. They do not dare to be happy in the conviction that they are accepted in the Beloved! They love the mournful string of the harp. They mourn an absent God. They hope that the Divine promises will be fulfilled—they trust that, perhaps, one of these days they may come forth into light and see a little of the brightness of the Lord's love—but now they are ready to quit, they dwell in the valley of the shadow of death and their soul is sorely burdened.

Dear Friend, do you think this is a proper condition for a Christian to be in? I am not going to deny your Christianity for a moment, for I have not half so much doubt about that as you have. I have a better opinion of you than you have of yourself! The most trembling Believer in Jesus is saved and your little faith will save you. But do you really think that Christ meant you to stay where you are, sitting in the cold and silent tomb amid the dust and ashes? Why keep underground? Why not come into the Master's garden where the flowers are breathing perfume? Why not enjoy the fresh light of full assurance and the sweet breath of the Spirit's comforting influences?

It was a madman who dwelt among the tombs—do not imitate him. Do not say I have been such a sinner that this is all I deserve to enjoy. If you talk of deserving, you have left the Gospel altogether. I know you believe in Jesus and you would not give up your hope for all the world. You feel, after all, that He is a precious Christ to you. Come, then, rejoice in Him though you cannot rejoice in yourself. Come, Beloved, come out of this dreary vault, leave it at once! Though you have lain among the pots, yet now you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. Your Master comes to you now and says, "O My Dove, that are in the clefts of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely."

Members of the body of a risen Savior, will you still lie in the grave? Arise and come away! Doubt no longer! O Believer, what cause have you to doubt your God? Has He ever lied to you? Question no longer the power of the precious blood. Why should you doubt it? Is it not able to cleanse you from sin? No longer enquire as to whether you are saved or can be—if you believe, you are as safe as Christ is! You can no more perish than Christ can if you are resting in Him—His word has pledged it, His honor is involved in it—He will surely bring you unto the promised rest! Therefore be glad. Why, I have known a Brother live down in the catacombs and vaults so long that he has condemned his Brethren for living in the sunlight, and has said, "I cannot understand a man speaking so confidently, I cannot understand it."

My dear Brother, because you cannot understand it, it is not, therefore, wrong. There is a great deal about eagles that owls do not understand. You that are always fretting and worrying in that way are sinning against God—you are grieving His Spirit! You are acting inconsistently with your Christian profession and yet you judge others who believe God to be true and take Him at His Word and therefore get joy and comfort out of His promise! Never do that—it would be wicked, indeed, for you to set yourselves up as judges. Instead, pray the Lord to lift up the light of His

Countenance upon you, to give you joy and peace in believing, for this He says, "Rejoice in the Lord you righteous, and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart." Come out of the tomb, dear Brothers and Sisters, for Jesus is not there and if He is not there why should you be? He is risen! O rise into comfort, too, in His Spirit's power!

Another sort of people seem to dwell among the tombs—I mean Christians—and I trust real Christians. They are very, very worldly. It is no sin for a man to be diligent in business, but it is a grievous fault when diligence in business destroys fervency in spirit—and when there is no serving of God in daily life. A Christian man should be diligent so as to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but there are some who are not content with this. They have enough, but they covet more, and when they have more, they still stretch their arms like seas to grasp in all the shore. Their main thought is not God, but gold—not Christ, but wealth.

O Brothers and Sisters, Brothers and Sisters, permit me earnestly to rebuke you lest you receive a severe rebuke in Providence in your own souls. Christ is not here! He dwells not in piles of silver. You may be very rich and yet not find Christ in it at all—and you might be poor, and yet if Christ were with you, you would be happy as the angels. He is not here, He is risen! A marble tomb could not hold Him, nor could a golden tomb have contained Him. Let it not contain you! Unwrap the grave clothes of your heart—cast all your cares on God who cares for you. Let your conversation be in Heaven. Set not your affection on things on the earth, but set it upon things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

Once more on this point, a subject more grievous still—there are some professors who live in the house of sin. Yet they say that they are Christ's people! No, I will not say they live in it, but they do what, perhaps, is worse—they go to sin to find their pleasures. I suppose we may judge of a man more by where he finds his pleasure than by almost anything else. A man may say, "I do not habitually frequent the gaieties of the world. I am not always found where sin is mixed with mirth and where worldlings dance upon the verge of Hell—but I go there now and then for a special treat." I cannot help quoting the remark of Rowland Hill, who, when he met with a professor who went to the theater—a member of his Church— said to him, "I understand you attend the theater." "No," he said, "I only go for a treat now and then."

"Ah," said Mr. Hill, "that makes it all the worse. Suppose that somebody said, 'Mr. Hill is a strong being, he eats carrion,' and I am asked, 'Is it true, Mr. Hill, that you live on carrion?' 'No, I do not habitually eat carrion, but I have a dish of it now and then just for a treat.' Why, you would think I was nastier than I should have been if I had eaten it ordinarily." There is much force in the remark. If anything that verges on the unclean and lascivious is a treat to you, why then, your very heart is unclean and you are seeking your pleasure and comfort among the dead!

There are some things that men take pleasure in nowadays that are only fit to make idiots laugh, or else to cause angels to weep. Do be particular, Christian men and women, in your company. You are brothers to Christ—will you consort with the sons of Belial? You are heirs of perfection in Christ. You are, even now, arrayed in spotless linen, and you are fair and lovely in the sight of God—you are a royal priesthood, you are the elect of mankind—will you trail your garments in the mire and make yourselves the sport of the Philistines? Will you consort with the beggarly children of the world? No, act according to your pedigree and your newborn nature and never seek the living among the dead. Jesus was never there—go not there yourselves. He loved not the noise

and turmoil of the world's pleasures. He had meat to eat of another kind. God grant you to feel the resurrection life strong within your spirits.

IV. But I pass on from that. In the fourth place, I want to warn you against UNREASONABLE SERVICES. Those good people to whom the angels said, "He is not here, but is risen!" were bearing a load, and what were they carrying? What is Joanna carrying, and her servants? And Mary, what is she carrying? Why, white linen—and what else? Pounds of spices, the most precious they could buy. What are they going to do? Ah, if an angel could laugh, I should think he must have smiled as he found they were coming to embalm Christ!

"Why He is not here and, what is more, He is not dead! He does not need any embalming, He is alive!" You might have seen all over England, on Good Friday, and also on this Easter Sunday, crowds of people—I have no doubt very sincere people—coming to embalm Christ. They tolled a bell because He was dead and they hung crepe over what they call their altars because He was dead, and they fasted and sung sad hymns over their dead Savior! I bless the Lord my Redeemer is not dead—and I have no bells to toll for Him, either! He is risen, He is not here! Here they come, crowds of them with their white linen and their precious spices to wrap a dead Christ up in!

Are they mad? But they say, "We were only acting it over again." Oh, was that it? Practical charades, was it? Acting the glorious Atonement of Calvary as a play! Then I accuse the performers of blasphemy before the Throne of the eternal God who hears my words! I charge them with profanity in daring to rehearse in mimicry that which was once done and done forever and is never to be repeated! No, I cannot suppose they meant to mimic the great Sacrifice, and, therefore, I conclude that they thought their Savior to be dead. And so they said, "Toll the bells for Him! Kneel down and weep before His image on a cross."

If I believed Jesus Christ died on Good Friday, I would feast all day long because His death is over! As He has ordained the high festival of the Lord's Supper to be His commemoration, I would follow His bidding and keep no fast. Who would sit down and whine over a Friend once dead if you know Him to be restored to life and exalted in power? Why toll a bell for a living Friend? However, I condemn not the good people any more than the angels condemned those holy women, only they may take their spices home and their white linen, too, for Jesus is alive and does not need them!

In other ways a great many fussy people do the same thing. See how they come forward in defense of the Gospel. It has been discovered by geology and by arithmetic that Moses was wrong. Straightway many go out to defend Jesus Christ. They argue for the Gospel and apologize for it, as if it were now a little out of date and we must try to bring it round to suit modern discoveries and the philosophies of the present period. That seems to me exactly like coming up with your linen and precious spices to wrap Him in. Take them away! I question whether Butler and Paley have not, both of them, created more infidels than they ever cured—and whether most of the defenses of the Gospel are not sheer impertinences. The Gospel does not need defending! If Jesus Christ is not alive and cannot fight His own battles, then Christianity is in an evil case.

But He is and we have only to preach His Gospel in all its naked simplicity, and the power that goes with it will be the evidence of its dignity. No other evidence will ever convince mankind. Apologies and defenses are well intended, no doubt—so was the embalming well intended by these good women—but they are of small value. Give Christ room, give His preachers space and

opportunities to preach the Gospel and let the Truth of God be brought out in simple language! And you will soon hear the Master say, "Take away the spices, take away the linen! I am alive, I do not need these." We see the same kind of thing in other good people who are sticklers for old-fashioned, stereotyped ways—they must have everything conducted exactly as it used to be conducted 100 or 200 years ago. Puritan order must be maintained and there must be no divergence.

The way of putting the Gospel must be exactly the same way in which it was put by good old Dr. So-and-So, and in the pulpit there must be the most awful dreariness that can possibly be compassed. And the preacher must be devoutly dull and all the worship must be serenely proper—lots of spices and fine linen to wrap a dead Christ up in! I delight to break down conventional proprieties. It is a grand thing to put one's foot right through merely human regulations—life cannot be strapped down by regulations fit only for the dead! Death lies wrapped up like a mummy in the museum—it will always do the proper thing, or rather won't do anything at all. But Life, reality, will show itself unexpected ways. Life will say what Death could not say. It will break out where it was not expected and break all your laws and regulations into a thousand pieces!

But still I see the good people holding up their hands in horror, and crying out, "Bring here the Arabian gum, the myrrh and the aloes. Bring here the linen—we must take care of our dear, dead Master." Leave Him alone! Leave Him alone, Man, He is alive and does not need your wrapping up. I do not hesitate to say that a great deal of Church order among Dissenters and Episcopalians, Presbyterians and all sorts of denominations— and a great deal of propriety and decorum, and regulation, and, "As-itwas-in-the-beginning-is-now-and-ever-shall-be-isms"—are only so much spices and knell for a dead Christ. But Christ is alive and what is needed is to give Him room!

I do not say this for my own sake—am I not always proper?—but I say it for the sake of earnest Brother Evangelists who, in preaching to the poor, use extravagance of language and perhaps of action. Let them use it. Scoffers say they are histrionic. Was ever anybody ever half so histrionic as Ezekiel? Did not all the Prophets do strange things to get the attention of the people? Why, the same charge was brought against Whitfield and Wesley—"These people are breaking through all rules," and so on. What a blessed thing it is when men can do it! Mr. Hill went to Scotland to preach the Gospel and they said he rode on the back of all order and decorum.

Then said he, "I will call my pair of horses by those names, and make it true." It was true! No doubt he did ride on the back of order and decorum, but then he drew souls to Christ with those two strange steeds and his breaking through rules enabled him to get at men and women who never would have been got at in any other way. Be ready to set Christ at liberty and give His servants liberty to serve Him as the Spirit of God shall guide them.

V. I wanted to speak, last of all, upon THE AMAZING NEWS which these good women received—"He is not here, but is risen!." This was amazing news to His enemies. They said, "We have killed Him—we have put Him in the tomb—it is all over with Him." Aha! Scribe, Pharisee, Priest! What have you done? Your work is all undone, for He is risen! It was terrifying news for Satan. He, no doubt, dreamed that he had destroyed the Savior—but He is risen! What a thrill had gone through all the regions of Hell! What news it had been for the grave!

Now it was utterly destroyed and Death had lost his sting! What news it was for trembling saints. "He is risen, indeed." They plucked up courage and they said, "The good cause is still the right one and it will conquer, for our Christ is still alive as its Head! It was good news for sinners! Yes, it is good news for every sinner here. Christ is alive! If you seek Him He will be found of you. He is not a dead Christ to whom I point you today. He is risen! And He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. There is no better news for sad men, for distressed, desponding and despairing men than this—the Savior lives—able, still, to save and willing to receive you to His tender heart!

This was glad news, Beloved, for all the angels and all the spirits in Heaven! Glad news, indeed, for them. And this day it shall be glad news to us, and we will live in the power of it by the help of His Spirit. And we will tell it to our Brethren that they may rejoice with us, and we will not despair any longer. We will give way no more to doubts and fears, but we will say to one another, "He is risen, indeed: therefore let our hearts be glad." The Lord bless you, and in coming to His table, as I trust many of His people will come, let us meet our risen Master. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 24:1-53.

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Luke 24,16 #1180 - Jesus Near But Not Recognized

JESUS NEAR BUT UNRECOGNIZED

NO. 1180

A SERMON DELIVERED

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But their eyes were restrained that they

should not know Him."

Luke 24:16.

THE Lord may be present with His people and yet they may not be conscious of it. They may be conscious of the effect produced thereby, but not of the fact itself. When the Lord visited Abraham in his tent on the plains of Mamre, at the first, at least, Abraham thought he was receiving a wayfaring man and so he entertained the Angel of the Covenant unawares. When the Lord appeared unto Jacob he rose up from the vision and said, "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not." Afterwards at the brook Jabbok, when the Covenant Angel wrestled with him, Jacob was not aware of the exact Character of the mysterious personage, for he said, "Tell me Your name." He did not understand who it was with whom he wept, made supplication and prevailed.

The same is true of Joshua. He saw a man standing with his sword drawn in his hand, and he challenged him, mistaking him for a warrior— he did not recognize the Person of his Lord until He said, "No, but as Captain of the Lord's host am I come." It is possible, then, for saints to be favored very remarkably with the Presence of their Master and yet for some cause or other they may not know that He is specially near them. So was it in the case before us, which let us consider.

I. We shall note, first, REASONS WHY, IN THE VERY PRESENCE OF THEIR MASTER, SAINTS MAY NOT KNOW THAT HE IS NEAR. The reason in this case was twofold—first, because their eyes were restrained. And secondly, because, as Mark tells us, He appeared unto them in another form. We must not suppose either of these reasons to be untrue, but that they are both true, and that the two evangelists have thus given us the whole of the Truth of God, one taking note of one part of it and the other of the other. The first reason, then, why these good men did not perceive the Presence of their Master was that, "their eyes were restrained." There was a blinding cause in them. What was it? We cannot dare say—where Scripture does not strictly inform us, it is not for us to dogmatize.

By some mysterious operation, their eyes, which were able to see other things, were not able to detect the Presence of their Master. They thought Him to be some common traveler. Still, we are permitted to say that in their case, and in the case of a great many disciples, their eyes may have

been restrained through sorrow. They were very grieved for they had lost their Master. He was gone they knew not where. They would have been glad, even, if they could have found His body, but certain women had gone to the sepulcher, and though they told a wonderful story about a vision of angels, yet to these men it sounded like a knell in their ears, "for Him they found not."

Ah, there is no sorrow to a Christian like the loss of his Master's Presence! May you and I never be able to bear it with composure. "The days shall come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, then shall they fast." Fast, indeed! There is no fast like that which sets in when those who have once seen the Bridegroom's beauty and tasted of the love that is better than wine, have to cry out, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" That careless spouse who had slept and would not open to her Beloved for a while—when her heart was touched and moved for Him—rose up and searched through the streets of the city for Him. She could not rest until she found Him and she made every watchman on the walls hear her question—"Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?" Sorrow will unsettle the judgment. Even holy sorrow for sin and grief for the absence of the Master may, sometimes, put a mote into the eye and destroy its clear vision. Even tears of repentance have prevented men from seeing Truths of God which might have made their hearts glad.

Again, in their case, in addition to the mysterious operation which held their eyes, which we do not attempt to account for, we have no doubt their eyes were restrained with unbelief. Had they been expecting to see Jesus, I think they would have recognized Him. If they had gone to Emmaus fully persuaded that He was alive somewhere upon the earth, as soon as they had seen Him approach, they would at least have said, "Perhaps this is the Master! Perhaps even now He is coming to us." They knew that His delights were with the sons of men, so that He would not long conceal Himself from His beloved while He was on earth. They knew, also, that He loved His own to the end and would love them still. They might, therefore, have felt sure that He would come to meet them—and had they been believing and expecting—they would, probably, have discovered Him at once.

Whether it is so or not, I am sure, dear Brothers and Sisters, that our unbelief has often hid the Lord from our eyes. What might we have known of our Lord by this time—what might we have tasted and handled of Him by this time if it had not been for our unbelief? He might say to some of us, "Have I been so long a time with you and yet have you not known Me?" By reason of our unbelief we have not dived into the mysteries of His heart! We have not understood the fullness of His love! Oh, for more faith! Faith has the eagle's eyes—it can see where other eyes cannot penetrate. Oh, for the eyes of love—the dove's eyes of love, by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set—for faith and love together make up a blessed pair of optics which can see the Lord even when clouds and darkness are roundabout Him!

Whatever may have been mysterious about the restraining of the disciples' eyes, they were also somewhat restrained by ignorance. They had failed to see what is plain enough in Scripture, that the Messiah must suffer, bleed and die. They had their sacred books and yet were so little acquainted with their real meaning that, albeit Christ is in every page of the Old Testament, yet they did not perceive Him there! And so, not knowing that all this must be as it had happened, and expecting something very different and more in accordance with the traditional views of their race— they did not recognize their Master. If it were not so with them, it is certainly so with many of God's people today Some professors—I speak it with sorrow—do not know more than the most

elementary doctrines of the Gospel. With the exception of knowing themselves sinners and Christ a Savior, they know nothing!

Justification, in the full glory of it, is hidden from their eyes. They do not consider the work of the Holy Spirit. The fullness of the union of the child of God with Christ and the Glory that is to come, which already casts a halo about the saints, they have not perceived. They do not study the Word so as to enter into its depths. They are afraid of some doctrines because they are said to be, "High Calvinism," and of other doctrines because they are denounced as, "Arminianism." They are frightened into joining a party, instead of taking the Truth as God has revealed it and beholding Jesus sitting upon the Truth like a king upon a throne of ivory. Beloved, the scales of ignorance have often restrained the eyes of the saints—it is well when the Holy Spirit opens our understandings to receive the Scriptures and enables us to see Jesus Christ as He truly is in the field of the Word of God—like a precious treasure hidden therein! Thus Jesus may be with His people, but they may not see Him because of something in themselves.

At other times they may not see Him because of something in the Master. Listen, as I have told you, Mark says He appeared unto them "in another form." I suppose he means in a form in which they had not seen Him before. The Lord Jesus Christ has appeared at times in the Old Testament to His servants, but on each occasion in a different form. To Abraham, who was a stranger and a wayfaring man in the land, He appeared as a pilgrim. To Jacob, who was a wrestler with his brother, He appeared as a wrestler. To Joshua, who was a soldier, fighting to conquer Canaan, He appeared as a soldier. To the holy children who were in the furnace He appeared as one walking amidst the burning coals. He puts Himself into fellowship with His people. So here the two travelers were overtaken by a third traveler—He appeared to them in that form in which they themselves were!

As He is to make them like Himself, He begins by making Himself like they are. "As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, so He, also, Himself took part of the same." Jesus condescends to our condition and our circumstances. There is no position into which Providence may cast us but what Jesus can sympathize with us. We see Him best under certain characters when we, ourselves, are in that form of character. Beloved, it may be you are a beginner in Divine Grace and, up to now, the Lord Jesus has appeared to you with a smile upon His face—as a gentle Shepherd leading the lambs. But possibly for a while He has gone, or you think so, for you feel His rebuke in your soul as if He were saying to you, "O fool and slow of heart."

You conclude within yourself, "This cannot be Christ. I thought He was always a feeder of lambs." Yes, so He is, but He sometimes comes with a scourge of small cords to chase out buyers and sellers from His Temple. He is the same Christ, only you have not seen Him in that Character. Perhaps you have only seen Jesus as your joy and consolation—under that aspect may you always see Him, but, remember—"He shall sit as a Refiner. He shall purify the sons of Levi." When you are in the furnace, suffering affliction, trial and depression of spirit, the Refiner is Christ, the same loving Christ in a new Character. Up to then you have seen Christ as breaking the Bread of Life to you and giving you to drink of the Water of Life, but you must learn that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge the floor of your heart. He is not another Christ, but He puts on another aspect and exercises another office.

At first, poor sinners are content to see Jesus as their Priest who cleanses them from sin. They must go on to see Him as their King who conquers them by the sacred arms of love—and they must also know Him as their Prophet—leading them into the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. They must not wonder if He appears unto them in another form while they are learning more of Him. This kind of sacred philosophy comes by experience, for how often do we find precious children of God distressed because they have not, today, the same sweets they used to have? At first we give little children such food as will be easily assimilated—they have nothing else but milk. By-and-by hard crusts are given them, for there are wisdom teeth to be cut. Suppose when we give them more solid food, they began crying out for the milk, again? Should we give it to them?

The Lord does not wish you always to be babes! He would have you grow into men in Christ Jesus. And though Christ is always your food whether He comes to you as milk or as meat, yet still He will not always be milk to you lest you should remain a babe. He means to be meat to you that your senses may be exercised, that you may be able to understand the stronger and deeper Truths of the Kingdom of God. Do not, therefore, be astonished! Or, if you are, let this always comfort you, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever," and though He may change the form under which He manifests Himself, yet He is the immutable Lord of Love.

You have thus heard two reasons why saints may have Christ with them and yet may not discern Him. First, because of themselves—their eyes are restrained. And, next, because of Himself—He may appear in another form.

II. Secondly, let us speak of the manners of the saints when they are in such a case. When their Master is with them and they do not know Him, how do they conduct themselves? First, they are sad because the Presence of Christ, if Christ is unknown, is not comfortable, though it may be edifying. It may be for rebuke, as it was to them, but it certainly is not for consolation. For joy, we must have a known Christ. Saints are always downcast when Jesus is not known to be present and, as I have said before, may we never be otherwise than unhappy if our Lord is hid from us. I can understand the child of God saying, "I am out of fellowship with Christ," but I cannot understand his saying that calmly and deliberately, without tears, without deep regret and intense repentance!

I can comprehend that the heir of Heaven may walk in darkness and see no light, but I cannot understand how he can be at home in darkness. Set a bird of the day flying by night and see how it flutters, and how uneasy it is. Go with a candle, if you will, to any place where a number of birds have made their nests, and see how strangely bewildered they are. The only bird that will be at home in the dark is the owl, the bird of the night—and if any one of you can be happy without your Master you are of the night. If you can be content without the sunlight of Jesus' Presence, depend upon it, you are one of the bats of the cavern—you are not one of the eagles of the day. God grant us to be like these disciples—sad, doubly sad, if we do not know our God to be with us.

Next, these disciples, though they did not know that their Master was there, conversed together—a good example for all Christians. Whether you are in the full joy of your faith or not, speak often to one another. He who is strong will help the weak Brother. If two walk together, if one shall trip, perhaps the other will not, and so he will have a hand to spare to support his friend. Even if both saints are unhappy, yet some good result will come from mutual sympathy. The one is saying, "I have lost my Master," and the other replies, "I have lost my Master, too," and they will

both know that they are not the only persons in such a case—and that is some help to a man in sorrow. Sometimes even a gleam of light, such as will arise from the fact that another is in the same plight, may be useful.

Christian people, commune together, but let your communications always be like these which are recorded in this chapter. Speak of Him, talk of Him, what you know of Him, of your sorrows about Him, even of your neglects of Him, of your ill treatment of Him, your sins against Him. Talk of these things to one another, for so long as they are about Him, it will be good, even, to confess your faults to one another, for it will lead you to pray for one another and to join your prayers together, so that there will be greater strength in the petitions. For if two of you are agreed, you know what power that sweet agreement has with Heaven. "They that feared the Lord spoke often to one another."

A blessed practice, an ancient practice, an edifying practice, a Godhonoring practice—one which so pleased God that He turned eavesdropper—came under the window to listen to what they said and took His notebook and recorded it—"a book of remembrance was written." And He has published it and given His blessing to "those that fear the Lord and that think upon His name." Beloved, even if you are out of fellowship with Jesus, do not forsake the assembly of God's people. Though you may feel unworthy to speak with them, yet get among them and perhaps, there, you will find your Master. Note, next, that these disciples, in addition to communicating with one another, were ready to be communed with by good men. When this new Pilgrim on the road came up and asked them a question, they were not shy, they were ready to give an answer. They poured out their hearts to Him and He talked to them, and they were soon on the way to being instructed. It is well for Christians to be willing to receive the Truth of God, not merely through their own immediate companions, but from others who fear the Lord, who perhaps may have looked at things from a different point of view and who may have received clearer light. These two disciples were communicative. It is a pity that Christian people so often shut themselves up within themselves.

This is a particular fault of English people. You may travel all over the world in the same railway carriage with an Englishman and he will not say a word to you! I am sure Christian people would get much good from one another if they would not be so distant. Many precious children of God have sat side by side by the hour together and out of undue reserve, which they have thought most proper, they have failed to communicate— and have missed the opportunity of a sacred commerce of thought and experience which would have enriched them both. Be ready to communicate (not, of course, being indiscreet, for there is such a thing as casting pearls before swine). Using a heavenly prudence, be free to speak to those who are willing to converse concerning Christ.

John Bunyan in his, "Pilgrim's Progress," has a very witty and pithy piece about Mr. Talkative, who joined with the pilgrims. And, if you remember, he would soon have wearied them with his chat, had not Christian and Hopeful adopted a capital expedient for getting rid of him. They would talk of nothing else but their inward experience in the things of God. And after a while Mr. Talkative dropped behind—that was not the sort of talk he wanted! And you will not long be troubled with the company of a gentleman who does not love your Master if you keep to the grand theme. He will soon be sick of you and go where his trashy wares are saleable, which they do not appear to be in

your market, for you have better goods on hand. These good people were communicative to those who could sympathize with them.

Note, again, that though they did not know their Master was there, yet they avowed their hopes concerning Him. I cannot commend all that they said, there was not much faith in it, but they did confess that they were followers of Jesus of Nazareth. "We trusted that it had been He which should deliver Israel. And, besides all this, today is the third day." And they went on to let out the secret that they belonged to His disciples. "Certain women of our company made us astonished." They were under a cloud and sad, but they were not so cowardly as to disown their connection with the Crucified. They were not so far gone in depression of spirit as to talk about the whole thing as though it were to be disavowed or concealed, lest anybody should say, "You were the foolish dupes of an impostor." They still avowed their hope. And oh, Beloved, when your comforts are at the lowest ebb, still cling to your Master! If I never get a smile from His face as long as I live, I must speak well of Him. If never again I see Him, yet is He the Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. I like to see the strong retentiveness of many an almost despairing saint. I remember a minister who was talking to a poor bedridden woman who was under a grievous cloud, and she said, "Sir, I do not think I have any faith or any love for Christ whatever." He knew better, for he knew what her life had been, and so, walking up to the window, he wrote on a piece of paper, "I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ," and he brought it back with a pencil, and said, "Now, Sarah, sign that."

When she had read it, she said, "Oh, Sir, I would be torn to pieces before I would sign that." "Oh, but you said it just now." "Ah, Sir, but I could not put my hand to it." "Then I suspect, Sarah, that you do love Him." "Well, Sir, whether I do or not, I will never give Him up." I remember visiting a woman, years ago, whom I never could comfort till she died, and then she died triumphantly. I said to her, "What do you come to the Chapel for? What is the good of it if there is nothing there for you?" "No," she said, "still I like to be there. If I perish, I will perish listening to the precious Word of God." "Well, but why is it you remain a member of the Church, as you say you are not a saved soul?" "Well," she said, "I know I am not worthy, but unless you turn me out I will never go out, for I like to be with God's people. I desire to be numbered with them, too, though I know I am not worthy, for I have no hope."

I said, "Well, now, come, I will give you five pounds if you will give up your hope altogether." And I drew out my purse. "Five pounds!" she said, and she looked at me with utter horror. "Five pounds!" She would not give Christ up for 5,000 worlds. "But you have not got Him, you said." "No, Sir, I am afraid I have not got Him, but I will never give Him up." Ah, there came out the real truth. So was it with these two disciples—they talked as if they could not give Him up! Though they were afraid that He had not risen from the dead, yet they remained His disciples, and spoke of, "Certain women of our company." They were half-unconsciously clinging to the forlorn cause in its very worst estate. And, Beloved, so will we. We will say with Job—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."—

"When our eye of hope is dim, We'll trust in Jesus, sink or swim. Still at His footstool bow the knee, And Israel's God our help shall be."

But, passing on—these poor people, though very sad, and without their Master as they thought, were very willing to bear rebukes. Although the word used by our Lord should not be rendered,

"fools," yet it sounds somewhat hard, even, to call them inconsiderate and thoughtless—but we do not discover any resentment on their part because they were so severely chided. Souls that really love Jesus do not grow angry when faithfully rebuked. Beloved, do you approve the sermon which cuts you up root and branches? Are you thankful for the ministry which smites your faults? Do you say to the Lord, as you bare your bosom to the sword of His Word, "Search me and try me"? Ah, then, there is something more in you than in the man of the world, for his proud heart rebels when his conscience is too roughly assailed.

I had, the other day, some such conversation as this reported to me—A man and his wife had come to the Tabernacle. The wife said she liked to go to Church—her husband said he preferred to come here. What do you think were the reasons for each choice? The woman said, "Spurgeon is too plain." "That is why I like him," said the husband. "He is too personal," said the wife, "I do not think people ought to be talked to in that way." "That is what we need," said the husband, "we need to have it brought home to us. What is the good of our going where there is nothing said that really belongs to us?" That is just so. We do not need a Gospel that belongs to the people on the moon, but to ourselves! Some admire a preacher who can send a stone so high that it never hits anything—but we need a preacher who can sling a stone to a hair's breadth and not miss the target of the conscience. Whatever deficiency there may be about them, those are right at bottom who can bear to be somewhat roughly rebuked by their Master.

And then, they were willing to learn. Never better pupils, never a better Teacher, never a better school book, never a better explanation! They were disciples, with Christ to teach them, with the Bible for a school book and Himself to be the exposition—so they listened while He went on to open up from Genesis right through the Old Testament—the things concerning Himself! Poor child of God, are you in doubt and trouble? Still be anxious to learn of Jesus! Pray the Lord to enlighten you! Ask Him to teach you His statutes and to open your eyes to behold wondrous things out of His Law, for whatever God's children may not be, they are a teachable people. They shall all sit down at His feet and all receive of His Words.

Again, dear Friends, notice that while the two were willing to learn, they also wished to retain the teacher and His instruction, and to treat Him kindly, too. They said, "Abide with us; the day is far spent." They had been benefited by Him and therefore they wished to show their gratitude to Him. Have you learned so much that you are willing to learn more? Are you of a teachable heart, ready to receive, with meekness, the engrafted Word of God? Now, I speak not of myself, for I have no cause to complain, but I have known true servants of Christ whom the people have driven forth from them because they were fickle and needed a change, for change's sake. They have not said, "Abide with us." Neither have they given them to eat, but though they have been worthy servants of God they have been thrust out not knowing where they should go—and their people not caring where.

I believe that God resents these things and that the unkind treatment of His servants will bring judgment upon the Church. If He sends ministers with His message, He expects them to be treated with respect and kindness. Just as Moses said to Hobab, so wise Believers say to God-sent ministers, "Come with us and we will do you good, and you shall be to us instead of eyes, for you know where we should encamp in the wilderness; and as the Lord deals with us so we will deal with you." These two disciples entertained their instructor and would not let Him go.

And, once more, though they did not know that their Master was with them, they were well prepared to join in worship. Some have thought that the breaking of bread that night was only Christ's ordinary way of offering a blessing before meat. It does not seem so to me, because they had already eaten and were in the middle of the meal when He took the bread and blessed it. I think He did, then and there, set before them those dear tokens of His passion, which He bids us feast upon on the first day of the week, that we may show His death until He shall come. Whichever it was, whether the devotion proper to their own table, or the devotion proper to the Lord's Table, they joined in it.

Now, it is a strong temptation of Satan with children of God, when they are full of sorrow, to tempt them to stay away from the means of Grace. Because they are in the dark, the temptation is to keep them away from the light—but oh, children of God, do not "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Do not be tempted to stay away from the place where God has met you and made the place of His feet glorious! Join, still, with the Lord's people—and if your faith trembles, yet, nevertheless, come humbly to the Table. Christ has not a Table for those without doubts, else you might not come—He has not made it a table for those without sin, else you might not come—but He bids all His disciples come, you among them!

III. Lastly, let us try to set forth THE ACTIONS OF BELIEVERS WHEN THEY DISCOVER THEIR LORD. "Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." What then? Well, first, they discovered that there had been, all along in their hearts, evidences of His Presence. "Did not our hearts burn within us while He spoke with us by the way?" This heavenly heartburn never comes to any but through the Presence of the Lord Jesus. They began to look at one another, and say, "Ought we not to have known that it was none other than our great Teacher by the very fact that when we did not see Him our hearts were burning for Him?"

Now let me turn this text around a little. There is a poor sinner here who says, "Oh, how I wish that I could find the Savior, but I cannot find Him." Why? Your heart is burning after Him! Who is it that makes you long after Him? Those strong desires are kindled by His Sovereign Grace. He is near you. "But I feel so much of the evil of sin! Oh, that it were rolled away. My heart cries, 'Give me Christ, or else I die.'" Do you think that humanity unrenewed by Grace cries in that way? Surely the Master is near you! There is already, if not a summer in your soul, at least a springtide. The ice is breaking up, the buds are beginning to swell, the sun is coming and you are beginning to feel His glow! The Lord is not far from you and one of these days when you come to look back upon it you will say, "I did not know it, but He was close to me. I said, 'Where shall I find Him?' and all the while He was close upon me!" I now turn to the child of God. You, perhaps, have said, "I have lost communion with my Lord in that happy form I once enjoyed. But I can never be satisfied without Him. I could sit down and cry my eyes out to think—

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed— How sweet their memory still! But they have left an aching void The world can never fill."

Where does this kind of heartburn come from? From the devil? Then he has undertaken a new business! Does it come from yourself? Is that a sheep calling the shepherd? To me it looks like the Shepherd seeking the sheep! But you say, "Oh, how I wish I could return to walking with God, in Christ, and sitting under His shadow with great delight." Do you desire it vehemently, passionately, as they that wait for the morning? Who made you desire it, do you think? Is He so far away where

those strong desires are present? I know it is not so!

"Ah," you say, "I feel in my soul that I love Him. Yet I am afraid I have no fellowship with Him. But when I hear His name extolled, I say in my heart, 'That is the sweetest music under Heaven.' When I hear my Master spoken well of, I wish I had the tongue of men and angels that I might speak of Him, too. He cannot be too greatly extolled for me. I find tears in my eyes when I hear of His true love for sinners. Sometimes I am afraid I deceive myself, and am not a partaker in it, but still He is a precious Christ, and glory be to His name." Do you think you would have your heart burning like that if He had quite gone? I think not!

You feel your heart burning for the conversion of others! You say, "Oh that we had a revival of religion everywhere, that the kingdom would come unto Christ and the crown were set upon His head over ten thousand times ten thousand human hearts!" Your heart breaks for the longing that Christ may be glorified among men, and yet you say, "I am afraid He is not with me"? One of these days you will say, "Did not my heart burn within me? He must have been near." You are blindfolded and cannot see the fire, yet, if on a cold day you get very hot, I should think there must be a fire near you! If you cannot see Jesus to your soul's comfort, yet still, if there is such glowing and burning as these, He is very near you!

Sometimes on the Sabbath do you not know what it is to say, "Oh, my Lord and Master, the days are weary in which I do not see You—when shall I behold You face to face?" You have heard of the glories of Christ in Heaven and you have longed to peep through the keyhole, if that were all, that you might see the King in His beauty! And you have cried, "Why is His chariot so long in coming?" You have often wished you could—

"Sit and sing yourself away To everlasting bliss."

Well, you may be sure the lodestone is not far off when the needle is so much moved. When your eyes are opened you will say, "Why, He was with me! He was with me! Did not my heart burn within me while He spoke with me by the way? My doubts and fears and trembling heart forbade my understanding how near the precious Christ was to me."

The next thing they did was to compare joys. The one said to the other, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" It is always a good thing for Believers to communicate their returning enjoyment. Somehow we are rather shy as to speaking of our joys. Ought we to be so? One does not mind speaking of his faults to his Brother, for there does not seem to be any assumption in that. But if the Lord is very gracious I have known Believers feel as if they could not speak of it lest they should seem to exalt themselves. We must studiously avoid everything like self-exaltation, but we must not rob our Master of a particle of His Glory. If we have seen the Lord, let us tell our Brothers and Sisters so, and say to one another, "Did not our hearts burn within us?"

If you had a very dull and dry discourse you would get together and say, "Oh dear, dear! Our Sundays are dreadfully wasted. We do not profit. The good man is so dull and dead," and so on. You would be sure to say that, would you not? Well, when the Lord refreshes you, say to one another, "It was good to be there this morning. We had a feast of fat things. The Lord was with us." Do not leave the table of spiritual bread till, like a good child, you have thanked your Father. Once again. These disciples, when they saw the Master, hastened to tell others about it. It was the dead of the night, I suppose, by the time they knew their Lord.

Our Lord Jesus had none of the prejudices of the High Church fraternity against breaking bread in the evening. That has always seemed to me to be the oddest of their freaks—that they will persist in contending that the Lord's Supper ought to take place early in the morning! They ought not to call it a, "supper"—they should call it a breakfast. I never could understand a certain class of Christians, great sticklers, too, for Scripture, who always will have the Lord's Supper in the morning of the day, without any precedent, that I know of, for turning an evening meal into a morning one. I grant there is no importance whatever in the time—the only importance that I speak of is putting an importance on a wrong time—which those do who say it ought to be in the early part of the day. We say that whenever Believers meet together they may break bread in remembrance of their Lord! If, however, there is one time more like the first occasion, it certainly is the evening of the day.

Though it was late, the two disciples set off on a seven-and-a-half mile journey, in the dead of night, to tell others that they had seen the Lord! If ever you find Christ to the joy of your heart, go and tell His people about it. Yes, and tell sinners, too, and put yourself to inconvenience to do it. Nowadays we are willing to testify if we can do it very comfortably—but I love to hear of those good Brethren who will walk many miles on Sunday to preach the Gospel—who are willing to sacrifice ease and comfort so that they may do good to others, just as these did. Oh, for more enthusiasm in telling of the Savior's love and hearing of it! We need nice cushions and very comfortable pews, don't we, nowadays? When we were first converted we would stand anywhere in the crowd if we could but hear the Savior's name!

I remember when I would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear about my Master, or to preach about Him, too. May our earnest love to Him never grow cold and our enthusiasm never depart. May a midnight's walk be nothing to us if we may but declare even to unbelieving brethren what we have seen of our blessed Lord! It is a good message, and it is a good errand to go upon, when we go to tell of Jesus—and it will bring good to our own souls.

I notice that while they told of their Lord's appearing, they made mention of the ordinance which had been blest to them, for they especially said that He had been known to them in the breaking of bread. I like to see them mention that, for, though ordinances are nothing in themselves, and are not to be depended upon, they are blest to us. There is a tendency among us, because others make too much of ordinances, to make too little of them. Do not treat Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or the reading of the Word of God, or the hearing of it, in a slighting manner. If these are blest to you, bless God for them! And if God speaks to you through them, do not forget to say that they have been valuable channels of communication.

And now, dear child of God, I pray for you and for myself that we may always have our Master with us—and may know it! But, if we lose His recognized Presence, may we act as these two disciples did, or better. May the Lord lead us on from strength to strength and glorify Himself in us. If there is any poor sinner here who needs Jesus Christ, let him remember that his desire after Christ is an indication of the nearness of the Savior to Him. Christ is always within eye-shot. He cries, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." He is close at hand to every seeking soul. "If you seek Him He will be found of you." "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near." Trust Him and He is yours. May Jesus abide with you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 24:1-35.

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Luke 24,25 #1980 - Folly of Unbelief

FOLLY OF UNBELIEF

NO. 1980

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 28, 1887,

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

Then He said unto them, O foolish men and slow of heart

to believe all that the Prophets have spoken."

Luke 24:25.

THE two disciples who walked to Emmaus and conversed together and were sad, were true Believers. We may not judge men by their occasional feelings. The possession of gladness is no clear evidence of Grace and the existence of depression is no sure sign of insincerity. The brightest eyes that look for Heaven have sometimes been so that they could not see their heart's true joy. Be not cast down, my Brothers and Sisters, if occasionally the tears of sadness bathe your cheeks. Jesus may be drawing near to you and yet you may be troubled by mysteries of grief.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to the two disciples and took a walk of some seven miles with them to remove their sadness, for it is not the will of our Lord that His people should be cast down. The Savior does, Himself, that which He commanded the ancient Prophet to do. "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem." Thus He spoke and thus He acts. He was pleased when He went away to send us another Comforter, because He wishes us to abound in comfort. But that promise proves that He was and is, Himself, a Comforter. Do not dream, when in sadness, that your Lord has deserted you— rather reckon that for this very reason He will come to you! As her babe's cry quickens the mother's footsteps to come to it more speedily, so shall your griefs hasten the visits of your Lord. He hears your groans, He sees your tears—are they not in His bottle? He will come to you as the God of All Consolation.

Observe that when the Savior did come to these mourning ones, He acted very wisely towards them. He did not at once begin by saying, "I know why you are sad." No, He waited for them to speak and, in His patience, drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn here the way of wisdom! Do not talk too much, yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. Jeremiah derives a measure of help from his own lamentations—even Job feels a little the better from pouring out his complaint. Those griefs which are silent run very deep and drown the soul in misery. It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy has an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties—do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them and they will be the better prepared to receive your words of cheer. Often, by facing the

Volume 33 1disease of sorrow, the cure is half effected, for many doubts and fears vanish when described. Mystery gives a tooth to misery and when that mystery is extracted by a clear description, the sharpness of the woe is over. Learn, then, you who would be comforters, to let mourners hold forth their wound before you pour in the oil and wine!

Learn also a sacred lesson, O you mourners! It is well for you, when you are pouring out your griefs, that you do so before the Lord. These two troubled wayfarers, though they knew it not, were telling their sorrow to Him who best of all could help them to bear it. You may tell your friends, if you will, and it will be some relief to you, but if you seek the Throne of Grace and make the Redeemer your chief Confidant, your relief will be sure! Get alone; shut the door; bow there, apart from the disciples, and say, "Jesus, Master, I would tell You that which saddens me! O great High Priest, who was compassed with infirmities, You will understand me better than my nearest friend and I would place myself beneath Your care!" How great the privilege that we have access with boldness to the ear and heart of Jesus our Lord!

Again, learn another point of wisdom. When our Lord had heard their statement of distress He might immediately have comforted them—a word would have done it. Did He not say, "Mary," and did she not at once turn and say, "Rabboni," with ecstatic delight? He went more wisely to work than to administer hurried consolation—He rather rebuked than encouraged them. He began by saying, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the Prophets have spoken!" Observe that I quote the Revised Version, for the Authorized is too harsh. Our Lord did not call them fools, but foolish persons. The difference is rather in the manner than in the sense. He chided them gently, but still wisely. He let them know that their unbelief was blameworthy and He called them foolish for indulging it. O beloved Brother, if your Master chide you, do not doubt His love! If, when you go to Him in grief, He answers you roughly, it is His love scarcely disguised, which thus seeks your truest welfare. If you believe in your Lord, you will reply, "Master, say on." If He calls you foolish, you will wonder that He does not say something worse of you—and in any case you will trust Him after the manner of Job when He said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Especially observe that our Savior's rebuke was aimed at their unbelief. Unbelief, which we so often excuse, and for which we almost claim pity, is not treated by our Lord as a trifle. It is for this that He calls them foolish. It is about this that He chides the slowness of their hearts. Do not let us readily excuse ourselves for mistrust of God. If we ever doubt our gracious Lord, let us feel ourselves to be verily guilty. Regard unbelief as a fault rather than a weakness. Brace yourselves to seek a braver and more constant faith than you have reached as yet. Why should we go on blundering and misjudging and, therefore, fretting when a little consideration will set us right and, at the same time, cause us to honor our Lord and to be, ourselves, filled with joy and peace through believing?

I am going to handle this rebuke as God the Holy Spirit shall help me— first addressing it to the true Believer and, secondly, to the seeker. I shall have to bring forth some bitter things which will act as a tonic, but by giving tone to your system, they will, in the end, remove your fears better than sweeter matters would have done. Hear, then, our Lord say, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the Prophets have spoken!"

In speaking to Believers, I would have them observe that our Lord rebuked their unbelief under two heads. First, as being folly and secondly, as arising from slowness of heart.

I. First, then, UNBELIEF IS FOLLY. Not to believe all that the Prophets have spoken and not to draw comfort out of it, is great folly. Folly! Note the word. "O fools! O foolish men!" It is folly such as makes the tender Jesus cry out!

It is folly because it arises from lack of thought and consideration. Not to think is folly. To give way to sadness, when a little thought would prevent it, is foolishness, is it not? If these two disciples had sat down and said, "Now the Prophets have said concerning the Messiah that He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter and thus was it with our Master," they would have been confirmed in their confidence that Jesus was the Messiah. If they had said, "The Prophet David wrote, 'They pierced My hands and My feet,'" they would have recognized in this their crucified Lord. And if then they had turned to the other passages of the Prophets in which they speak of Messiah's future Glory, they would have been refreshed with hope.

In the Scriptures they would have found types, figures and plain words in which the death and the rising again—the shame and the Glory of Christ are linked together—and His Cross is made the road to His Throne. Had they compared the testimony of the holy women with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they would have obtained ground of hope. The women reported that the body was no longer in the tomb and that they had seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Two Apostles went to the sepulcher and gave a similar report—and this tallied with the Lord's own words in which He made Jonah His type—because he came up from the deep on the third day. But they forgot the Scriptures! They did not think of that great source of hope. Their eyes were dimmed with tears so that they did not see what was plain before them. How many a precious text have you and I read again and again without perceiving its joyful meaning because our minds have been clouded with despondency! We take the telescope and try to look into heavenly things—and we breathe upon the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety till we cannot see anything—and then we conclude that there is nothing to be seen!

Do you not think, Beloved, you that are depressed and sorrowing today, that if you thought more of the promises revealed in God's Word, you would soon see things differently and would rise out of your downcast condition? You put your Bibles away and read nothing but the roll of your troubles! There are no handkerchiefs for the tears of saints like those which are folded up within the golden box of God's Word. He who inspired this volume is "The Comforter"—will you not apply to Him in your dark hours? O you whose melancholy arises from forgetfulness of the Words of your heavenly Father, of the tender Savior and of the Divine Spirit, I beseech you be more considerate! Think of God's Providence, His unchanging love, His power, His faithfulness, His mercy. Think of the promises and, as you handle them by thought, they will exhale a sweet perfume which will delight you! Holy thought will charm you out of your griefs. But what folly it is that, for lack of thought, we should bow our heads like the bulrush, when, like the sunflower, we might look at the light till we became little suns ourselves!

Unbelief is folly because it is inconsistent with our own professions. The two disciples professed that they believed in the Prophets and I have no doubt that they did. They were devout Jews who accepted the Holy Books as Divinely Inspired and, therefore, Infallible. And yet now they were acting as if they did not believe in the Prophets at all! Are we not often found guilty of the same inconsistency? O Brothers and Sisters, it is one thing to say, "I believe the Bible," but it is quite another thing to act upon that belief! We have more of seeming faith than of real faith! That Book is

true and every promise in it is true—and I know and believe that it is so—and yet, when I come to the test, how much of faith evaporates and how sadly my fluttering heart proves that my belief was more in fancy than in fact? There is more infidelity in the best Believer than he dreams of. We think we believe in the whole and yet, when it comes to the detail and we have to deal with this promise and with that as a matter of fact in everyday life, we have to light a candle and sweep the house to find our faith. What folly this is!

If the Word of the Lord is true, it is true and we ought to act upon it. If it is not true, why do we profess to believe it? That which is unquestionably true will bear all the strain and pressure which life and its trials may put upon it and it is for us to act upon this belief. Brethren, it ill becomes us to play at believing—let us have our wits about us and make serious business of that which is not sent to delude us, but soundly to instruct us! The Word of the Lord is in harmony with His Providence and as we believe Him as to the one, we must trust Him as to the other! We may safely rest the weight of our body and soul—our present and future—upon the sure promise of a faithful God. And we are bound by our profession to do so. It is folly to call ourselves believers in the Bible and then to doubt and distrust.

Folly, again, is clearly seen in unbelieving sadness because the evidence which should cheer us is so clear. In the case of the Brothers going to Emmaus, they had solid ground for hope. They speak, to my mind, a little cavalierly of the holy women as, "certain women." Yet there were no better disciples in the world than those women. They were surely the best of the chosen company—Mary and the Magdalene. Even the testimonies of Peter and John, the very chief of the Apostles, are not sufficiently valued, for they speak of, "certain of them which were with us." I say not they speak disrespectfully, but there is a slurring of their witness by casting a doubt upon it. Concerning these godly women, they leave an impression on my mind as if they had said, "Women will talk and these women said that they had seen a vision of angels which said that He was alive." It is rehearsed as hearsay of a hearsay—they said that they had seen those who had said. If they had been pushed to the point, the two disciples would not have allowed that the Magdalene and the other women, or Peter, or John, were unworthy of credence! And yet they were, by their sadness, acting as if the witnesses were mistaken. If those who were at the empty sepulcher were to be believed, why did they doubt? The evidence which they, themselves, detail, though we have it only in brief in this place, was conclusive evidence that Christ had left the tomb—and yet they doubted it!

Now, dear Friends, you and I have had superabundant evidence of the faithfulness of God and if we are unbelieving, we are unreasonable and foolish! At least I stand here to confess that whenever I doubt my God it is, on my part, a superfluity of naughtiness. I have never had any reason to distrust Him! These many years that I have trusted in Him, He has never failed me once! Experienced Christians, how can you waver in your confidence? If we disbelieve, is it not folly? If the Savior does not call us fools, we are forced to call ourselves so!

We could not suppose that the promise, Covenant and oath of God could fail. The supposition cannot be tolerated for an instant! Thousands of souls are resting everything upon the faithfulness of God and desire no other security. But if God is unfaithful, what will become of them? If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do? Then they that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, or, even if they are in Heaven, what security have they there if God can change? I

feel quite safe on board the ship of the Covenant, for all the saints are floating in this one vessel. If God fails, then we all fail together and that is the end of faith, hope and all things! Therefore, let us not be so foolish as to sin against the light of clear Truths of God. Let us believe what we have known, tasted and handled. Let past experience anchor us firmly as to future circumstances.

Unbelief is folly because it very often arises out of our being in such a hurry. They said, "Beside all this, this is the third day." I know that they had expected great things on that third day and were justified in expecting them. But still, the day was not yet over and they were in as great a fever as if it were past a month ago! Although the Savior had said that He would rise on the third day, He had not said that He would appear to them all on the third day. He told them to go into Galilee and there they should see Him—but that meeting had not yet come. "He that believes shall not make haste," but they that do not believe are always restless! Well is it written, "You have need of patience." God's promises will be kept to the moment, but they will not all be fulfilled today. Divine promises are, some of them, bills which are payable so many days after sight—and because they are not paid at sight we doubt whether they are good bills—is this reasonable? Are we not foolish to doubt the sure handwriting of a God that cannot lie? Because the Lord has not carried out your interpretation of His promise in the way of your own dictation, therefore you question His truthfulness? If the vision tarries, will you not wait for it? It will come in its own appointed time. Would you have it hurried on for you? What next? Shall the sun and moon be quickened in their pace to suit your rashness? Must God, Himself, alter His purposes at your bidding? Truly, things have come to a pretty pass! Are you a man, or God? If you are a man, wait God's time and in your patience possess your soul. If you do not, but, like a fretful child, must have everything now, or else cry and fight, you deserves the rod and well may the Lord say to you, "O foolish one!" Yet, again, I think we may well be accused of folly whenever we doubt, because we make ourselves suffer needlessly. There are enough bitter wells in this wilderness without our digging more. There are enough real causes of sorrow without our inventing imaginary ones. I believe that the sharpest griefs in the world are those that men make for themselves. No asp ever stung Cleopatra so terribly as that which she held to her breast, herself. Certain of our friends spend all their days in stitching away to make themselves garments of sackcloth. I have seen the cobbler with his lap stone cobbling up a trouble and he has done his work so well that the shoe has pinched his feet for many a day. It seems a pity, does it not? Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we have those about us who are great at selfworrying. When you were boys, I do not suppose you ever went into the woods to find a stick for your father to beat you with—but you have done so, again and again, since you have been men—and the more is the pity that you should be so foolish. If these two travelers had considered and believed, they would have known that Christ was risen from the dead! And as they walked along to Emmaus, if, indeed, they had ever taken that walk at all, their faces would have brightened at the prospect of soon seeing Him whom they loved so well.

I want you to notice yet further that it was folly, but it was nothing more. I feel so thankful to our Lord for using that word. Though we ought to condemn our own unbelief with all our hearts, yet our Savior is full of tenderness and so freely forgives that He looks upon our fault as folly and not as willful wickedness. He does not take our doubt as an affront, but He calls it folly. He knows that it is true of His children, as it is of ours, that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. He puts that down to childish folly which He might have called by a harsher name. I am sure that any dear, obedient child, will feel thankful if his father calls his fault by the lighter name of, folly—because it will prove

that he loves him and will endeavor to teach him better. It was not wicked rebellion—there was no enmity in it. They loved their Lord, though they feared He had not risen from the dead.

I do not want you to draw undue comfort from this gentle word, but yet I would have you lose none of the cheer it is meant to convey. You that are vexed at your own doubts are not to come to the conclusion that the Lord utterly rejects you. He discriminates between the folly of a child and the wickedness of a rebel—He knows what is in your heart and knows that you are His. You are like a ship that is well anchored and though the tide is rushing in and makes your vessel roll from side to side, so that you stagger, yet the vessel is not loosed from its moorings—neither are you in any danger! Your faith is fixed on Christ and this Anchor holds you. Though you are tossed about a little, you will suffer no shipwreck because of sin, but much sea-sickness because of folly! So much concerning unbelieving sadness as folly.

II. In the second place, our Lord rebuked them for SLOWNESS OF HEART TO BELIEVE.

This is an evil greatly to be fought against, but it is by no means a rare sin among the people of God. Let me try and bring home the charge made by our Lord against the two disciples, since I fear it applies to us as much as to them. Our hearts are full often sluggish in believing—at least, mine is so—and I suppose we are much alike.

First, we are slow in heart to believe our God, for we are much more ready to believe others than to believe Him. I am often amazed with the credulity of good people whom I had credited with more sense. Credulity towards man and incredulity towards God are amazing things to find in the same person! We cannot help seeing in the daily papers how easily people are duped. Get up a prospectus and a list of names as directors, including a titled pauper, and you can bring in money by the wagonload! The confidence trick can still be successfully performed. One impostor lived for months by calling at the door of guileless old people in almshouses and telling them that a cousin in America had died and left them a fortune—but it was essential that fees should be paid at the government offices—and then the legacy would at once be handed over. Times after times the money has been scraped together; the rogue has gone his way and no more has been heard of the cousin in America!

There are so many simpletons about that rogues reap harvests all the months of the year. And yet the God of Truth is doubted! Yet the incorruptible Word is mistrusted! This makes our slowness of heart in believing God all the more sad a sign of our inward depravity of nature. We can believe, for we believe in man! In the course of our lives we are fools enough to believe in men to our cost. In fact, it is not easy to rise out of this snare, and yet we are slow at heart to believe our God! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, can we excuse ourselves? The Lord forgive and cleanse us! Let us henceforth accept every syllable of God's Word as Infallible while we turn our unbelief towards man and his philosophies and infidelities!

Is it not clear that we are slow of heart to believe since we judge this of others when they are mistrustful? When we see our Brethren in trial desponding and distrusting, we are very apt to think them needlessly dull and sinfully slow to grasp the promise. And yet, if we come into the same case, we are by no means better than they! That which we censure, we commit. The beam is in our own eye as well as the mote in our brother's eye. You have come home from visiting a friend who was distressed at heart and you have said, "I cannot make her out, I have put the promises

before her, but she is so foolish that she refuses to be comforted." Yes, and from this learn what you may be! Within a month's time, you may be sinking in the same mire! An evil heart of unbelief is to be found in many a breast where its existence is least suspected.

But if we see the folly of others, will we not confess our own? Dare we commit what we condemn? Did you ever say of Job, "It was a pity that after all his patience, he spoke so bitterly and cursed the day of his birth"? I wonder how many of us would have been any better than Job? I dare not hope that I should have been worthy to unloose the laces of his shoes. If I had been bereaved as he was—and tortured with the same burning boils and, worst of all, irritated by critics with their cruel candor and malignant sympathy—I could not have behaved so grandly as he did. Let us not severely judge others. They ought to believe, of course. They ought to be more cheerful. They ought not to let their burdens crush them so completely—but when we, also, are tempted, shall we be so very much superior? I fear not! Let us see ourselves in the weakness of our Brothers and Sisters and confess that the Savior's Words are true—we are "slow of heart to believe."

There is another point in which we are very slow of heart to believe, namely, that we believe and yet do not believe. We must be very slow of heart when we say "Yes, I believe that promise," and yet we do not expect it to be fulfilled! We are quick of mind to believe mentally, but we are slow of heart to believe practically. The very heart of our believing is slow. Our dear Friend, Mr. George Mueller, whom may God long preserve, says that one of his objectives in journeying about, at his advanced age, from Church to Church, is to try and lead God's people to real faith in the promises of God. He says, "As for 57 years I have seen how very little real trust in the living God there is, (generally speaking), even among true Christians, I have sought, in these, my missionary tours, particularly to strengthen their faith, because in the course of my pastoral labors, the blessed results of real confidence in God, on the one hand, have come to my knowledge, and the misery of distrusting Him, on the other."

Mr. Mueller's objective is a very desirable one, but what fools we must be that this should be necessary! There are plenty of people who believe God after a superfine kind of fashion up there on the edge of the moon, or, "at the back of the north wind." But they do not believe the Lord in their shops, or on their beds, or in their kitchen—they cannot believe as to bread, cheese, house rent and clothes. They talk about believing in the Lord for eternity, but for this day and next week they are full of fear! True faith is everyday faith! The faith of the Patriarchs was a faith which dwelt in tents and fed sheep. We need a faith which will endure the wear and tear of life—a practical, realizing faith which trusts in God from hour to hour! Oh, to be delivered from shams and windbags—and to believe God as a woman believes her husband, or a child believes its father! I hear of writers of "the realistic school"—we need Believers of the realistic order! We need faith in which there is backbone and grit. We are sham Believers and so we lead sham lives. The promises of God speak to us as Jesus spoke to His disciples when He rose from the dead—each one cries, "Handle Me and see." God's Words are not chaff, but wheat! Not wind, but bread! We are slow of heart because, while we think we are believing all that God says to us, it often turns out that our believing is all a puff.

These two disciples must have been slow of heart to believe, again, because they had enjoyed so much excellent teaching and they ought to have been solid Believers. They had been for years with Jesus Christ, Himself, as a Tutor, but they had not learned the elements of simple faith. "Oh,"

you say, "they were very slow!" Are not you the same? How many years have you been with Jesus? Perhaps for even 30 years, He has, Himself, taught you, has He not? Let me remind some of you of the remarkable events of your lives. What wonderful Providences you have seen! What singular deliverances you have experienced! What Divine upholding you have enjoyed! What heavenly consolations you have received! If you doubt the Savior, you may well be called, "slow of heart to believe." After what you have experienced, my Brothers and Sisters, the shadow of a doubt should never fall upon you! Have you not said many times, in the flush of your gratitude for some signal favor, "There, I can never doubt my Lord again"? You were foolish when you made that boastful observation, but you are more foolish, still, for running back from it! You have passed through the Red Sea and with your timbrel in your hand you have sung unto the Lord—and yet, perhaps, after a short march—you have tasted the bitter waters of Marah and opened your mouth in murmuring! Only God is wise—and we are fools! He alone has understanding—and we are "slow of heart."

Once more, these two disciples were very slow of heart to believe because there is so much in the Word which ought to have convinced them. See how the Savior puts it—"Slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken." What a mighty, "all," that is! Brethren, are you half aware of the treasure hidden in the field of Scripture? Are you as familiar with your Bibles as you should be? If so, you will join with me in speaking of Scripture as having almost a redundancy of confirmatory testimony! There is rock enough here for us to build upon. We have here not only precept upon precept, but promise upon promise—and all these confirmed by pledge, oath, and Covenant of the Lord God Almighty! The teaching of Scripture is so full, so varied, so convincing, that we are, indeed, slow of heart if our faith is not firm and immovable.

Brothers and Sisters, a lack of familiarity with the Word of God is very often the seed-plot of our doubts! Half our fears arise from neglect of the Bible. Our spirits sink for lack of the heavenly food stored up in the Inspired Volume. God forbid that you should fly to light literature to awaken your mind! Go to the solid literature of the promises and be established with food more suitable for an immortal soul. Like Luther, say, "Come, let us sing a Psalm and drive away the devil." There is no enchantment for the casting out of evil spirits like a resort to the Divine Word. When you see more of what God has revealed, you will rise out of your doubts and fears—and your slowness of heart to believe will depart from you.

Before I leave this point, I beg you to notice that the Savior does not say that they were "hard of heart," but, "slow of heart." I like to notice that. When He is most severe, He is still tenderly discriminating. "Slow of heart" we are, but there is no enmity in our heart towards Him. It is slowness and that is bad enough, but our Lord graciously helps our pace. Our face is in the right direction and our feet are going the right way—but we are slow in heart and lame in faith. As David spared Mephibosheth and admitted him to his table, though lame in both his feet, so the Lord loves us and communes with us, slow of heart though we are! It is bad to have a slow heart, very bad. But it would be much worse to have an unrenewed heart. With all our doubts and fears, we have no longer a heart of stone, but a heart of flesh which mourns because of its sinful unbelief. The Lord knows the difference between the sin of hating the Truth of God and the folly of doubting it. Strive against this slowness of heart, but still, let not Satan come in as an accuser and condemn you as though you were not a child of God at all.

So there I leave it. There is the Master's gentle rebuke not meant to discourage you, but to encourage you. He calls you foolish in order that you may be so no longer. Believe—and this shall be your wisdom. III. Will the Lord's people kindly pray for me while I now speak to the unconverted? Ask that I may have God-speed while I try and speak to those who are seeking the Lord and have not yet believed in Him. I want to say to them just this—"O foolish men and slow of heart to believe!" Some of you are really seeking the Lord, but you say that you cannot believe though you long to. You are not like the spider, whose motto is, "I get everything out of myself." You do not hope to spin salvation out of your own heart—you admit that salvation must be through faith in Christ. So far so good! But how is it that you do not at once believe? You say you cannot! How is it that you cannot believe in Jesus? He commands you to believe in Him and promises that you shall be saved! Trust Him and you shall live as surely as His Word is true.

Listen! This unbelief proves you to be foolish and slow of heart, for there are other parts of His Word which you easily believe. If there is a threat or a condemnation, you believe it. If there is a text that speaks of judgment to come, you believe it. You have a quick eye for anything which reads hard and looks dismal. Have I not seen you reading the Word and stopping at a passage and saying, "Alas, this makes my case hopeless. I have sinned the sin that is unto death"? You believe in more than God has said, for you read your own thoughts into God's Word and make it say more than it means! You are ready enough to take in the hard things, but the gracious promises of the loving Christ you will not believe. How can you justify this? How foolish you are! The promises are in the same Book as the threats—and if you believe the one, believe the other! Certainly the cheering Words come from the same Inspiration as the depressing ones— if you believe that which looks dark, believe that which looks bright!

Next, you are very foolish because your objections against believing are altogether poor and puerile. I think I have heard hundreds of them in my time, but out of all the objections raised by troubled souls against believing in Jesus, there is not one worthy of serious discussion. One man cannot believe in Jesus because he does not feel humble enough—as if that affected Christ's power to save! If he felt more humbled, then he could believe in Jesus. Would not that be just believing in himself and trusting in his own humility instead of trusting in Christ? One man cannot believe in Christ because he is not like a certain great saint. Does he expect that he is to be like a great saint when he first comes to Christ? Has not Christ come to save sinners?

Another says he cannot believe because he has not felt the terrors of the Law and the dread of Hell. Does he think that his terrors are to save him? Would his dreads and horrors help Christ to save him? Would he not be trusting his terrors and not Christ? The Lord Jesus says, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." The Gospel is to be preached to every creature—and every creature that believes it shall be saved! But these people back out of it and begin hammering out reasons for their own destruction! A sadly suicidal business this! Let the devil invent reasons for my not being saved—it is not a business which can bring me any form of good. Nothing can stand against the promise of God—He commands me to believe on His Son, Jesus, and I do believe—and I am saved and shall be saved—despite all the objections which may be raised by carnal reason.

Though you find it so hard to believe Christ, you have found it very easy to believe in yourself. Not long ago you were everybody and now you cannot believe that Christ is everybody. You thought

you were very good. You were wonderfully easy in your own mind when you ought to have been afraid. What? Was it easy to believe your poor self and can you not believe the faithful Word of a good and gracious Savior who says that if you trust Him you shall be saved?

Moreover, you are very apt, now, to believe Satan if he comes and says that the Bible is not true, or that Jesus will not accept you, or that you have sinned beyond hope, or that the Grace of God cannot save you. Of course you believe the Father of Lies—and you go mourning and moping—when you might at once go singing and dancing if you would believe your Savior! Jesus bids you trust and live! Satan says it is of no use your trusting—you believe Satan—and treat your Lord as if He had intended to deceive you! "O fools and slow of heart!"

Then you know how ready you are, you seekers, to stop short of Christ. If you hear a sermon and get a little melted and go home and pray a bit, you get quite easy and say, "Now I am on the road." Why, your melting and your praying are not the road to Heaven! Jesus says, "I am the way." You are not on the way till you get to Him. You have been in gracious company and singing holy hymns. You feel quite good and are highly pleased with yourselves. What right have you to be restful even for a moment? How dare you linger till you have reached the City of Refuge, which is Jesus Christ? Till you believe in Christ you have no right to a single moment's peace, or hope, or joy! And yet you do get a sort of peace and a kind of hope which are only sparks of your own kindling which will die out in blackness. Because you are content to trust in something short of Christ, I say to you—Why not rest in Jesus? O fools and slow of heart! Refuges of lies you fly to, but the true refuge of the finished work of Jesus Christ you do not accept? Why is this?

And then some of you are foolish and slow of heart because you make such foolish demands upon God. You would believe if you could hear a voice! If you could dream a dream! If some strange thing were to happen in your family. What? Is God to be tied to your fancies, that you will not believe Him unless He does this and that extravagant thing? If He chooses to bring some to Himself by extraordinary means, must He do the same with you, or else you prefer to be cast into Hell? Surely you are mad! Who are you that you are to dictate to the Lord and say He shall do this, or that, or else you will refuse to believe Him? And so you will trample on the blood of Jesus and turn our back upon the Kingdom of Heaven unless an angel is sent to you, or you hear a voice from Heaven? O fools and slow of heart, to make these irrational demands upon the ever-blessed God!

You are foolish and slow of heart because, to a great extent, you ignore the Word of God and its suitability to your case. If a soul in distress will take down the Bible and turn it over, he need not look long before he will light upon a passage which describes himself as the object of mercy. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Does not that fit you? "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake His way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Does not that fit you? "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Does not that apply to you? Why, if you will but look through the Word, you shall find passages so pertinent to your condition that, as a key fits a lock, they will seem made for you! Those two disciples did not, for a while, see how the Prophets met the case of the crucified and risen Christ. But as they did see it, their hearts burned within them. As you also see

how God has provided for your condition in His Word, in His Covenant, in His Son, your sadness will flee away.

I close with this one word of warning to those of you who are distressed in heart and are falling into the habit of looking for reasons why you should not believe in Christ. I do pray you to leave off this silly practice. Before this evil becomes chronic with you, quit it as a deadly thing. People can reason themselves down, but they cannot reason themselves up again. If you see a door open, in God's name hasten in, for one of these days you may be so blind as never to see an open door again! Seize this opportunity—and while Christ stands and says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden"—come along with you! If you sit down to argue against Christ, He may allow your conclusions to stand to your own destruction. Those who are so foolish as to find 20 unhallowed reasons today, will be foolish enough to find 200 such reasons next year! A man may act the cripple till he grows hopelessly lame. Mind what you are doing! You may lock a door and open it again for many a year—but one of these days you may so hamper the lock that it will not open again. Oh, that you may at once believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life!

I have come to this pass myself—if I perish, I will perish believing in Jesus! If I must be lost, I will be lost clinging to His Cross! Can any man be lost there? No, "fools and slow of heart" though we may be, we know that none shall perish who come to Christ, for that would greatly dishonor the Savior's name. God bless you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 24:13-35. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—676, Psalms 42:1-11 (VER. I),

191.

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Luke 24,28-29 #1655 - The Blessed Guest Detained

THE BLESSED GUEST DETAINED

NO. 1655

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 23, 1882,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then they drew near unto the village where they were

going, and He made as though He would have gone

further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide

with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is

far spent. And He went in to stay with them."

Luke 24:28-29.

WHAT a blessed walk was that from Jerusalem to Emmaus! Were they not highly favored men to have such a companion as the Lord Jesus, to hear Him converse upon such a subject and to feel their hearts burning within them with so Divine a flame? Brothers and Sisters, these are not the only men who have walked with the Lord Jesus. I trust I look into the eyes of full many who can say, "We, too, have communed with the Son of the Highest. The eyes of our faith have seen Him and our ears have heard His voice. We have known that Jesus, Himself, drew near, and we have heard the Words of Holy Scripture as though they fell fresh from His lips, and thus they have, by the power of the Holy Spirit, burned in our hearts and made our hearts to burn like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame."

Thank God, our Divine Master is still the familiar Friend of His disciples and our walk is with Him. In one sense, "He is not here, for He is risen." But in another sense He is more peculiarly here because He has risen and, whereas, unrisen He could only have been in one place at a time, now that He is risen He is, by His Spirit, present with thousands of His people at the same moment and He walks not only from Jerusalem to Emmaus, but to many a village, through many a garden, along many a street! Jesus delights to manifest Himself to His people—He is not strange unto His own flesh. We are bound to bear witness to the fact that He is not ashamed to call us Brothers and Sisters and to be found walking with us.

Yes, even to those who are not His people, Jesus comes very near at times. And though they know Him not, He walks at their side and this not in silence, for He instructs them by His Word and makes their hearts warm by His sacred influence. I pray that any remark, this morning, which shall be made to Believers may also lay hold of those attentive hearers to whom the kingdom has come

very near, for some of you have often been moved in this House of Prayer as you have heard Jesus speak, and speak to you! And if you have not been able to call Him, Friend, yet you have heartily wished you could do so. You have been more than half inclined to cast in your lot with His disciples because their Master has warmed your hearts, if He has not made them burn—and if there has not been the glow of life, yet there have been many flickering desires. I pray that Jesus may never leave you, but that your intimacy with Him may be growing till at last you shall know Him and He shall know you—and there shall be a union formed between you which never shall be broken.

To return to that walk to Emmaus. How short it must have seemed! By far too short for hearts so sad, who at every step found solace. I forget how many miles it was, just now. It does not matter. I should think it seemed as if it had scarcely begun when it ended—with such light feet they tripped over that pathway that they thought Emmaus had been attracted nearer to the city! It was so short because it was so sweet. The conversation was such as good men prize more than dainties. The intonations of that Voice must often have awakened memories within them which half compelled them to recognize their Lord!

His sweet voice must have charmed them and the words He uttered, the wondrous words of exposition and consolation, how much they enriched them! Nor was that walk more sweet than solemn, for it is no mean thing to walk with the risen Son of God! Kings might fling their crowns away to enjoy five minutes of such honor—it was nothing less than sublime! Those Brothers must have often, during the rest of their lives, looked at each other and said, "We walked with Jesus!" I should think whenever they met, their conversation would have in it fresh recollections of that walk and each one would say to his fellow, "Brother, I have just remembered a point whereon the Lord spoke to us. Do you not recollect the significant hint which He gave us as to the meaning of the Prophet?"

If you and I had ever actually walked with Jesus, I am half afraid we might have grown proud of it. At any rate, if we were helped not to be proud, yet it would always be a sublime memory. How sublime a thing to have kept pace with Incarnate Deity and marched foot to foot with Him who is God over all, blessed forever! No angel has ever walked with Jesus—they cast their crowns before Him and fly upon His errands—but He has not given unto angels the privilege of such familiar conversation. How solemn to those who all unwittingly had enjoyed it! I think when they knew Him, they must have been overwhelmed with the thought that they had been so near!

And they must have feared, in the silence of their souls, that possibly they had been rashly familiar. Surely they said, each one to Himself, "Did we say anything improper? Was it this which made Him call us fools? When we were expressing our doubts, did we not grieve Him? Alas, that we should have so misbehaved ourselves!" They must have looked back upon that high honor with great awe, even as Jacob did after he had communed with God at Bethel and said, "Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and the very gate of Heaven."

Brothers and Sisters, it is a great thing to come near to Christ! And you who have not yet believed in Him, I should like you to feel in what a solemn position you have sometimes been placed, when, "He has been evidently set forth, crucified, among you!" And you have felt somewhat of that Presence. Jesus does not draw near to a man for nothing. He has an influence upon all whom He

visits. Your sense of His Presence has left upon you a deep responsibility, especially if you have remained chill under the influence of His holy love and have refused to believe in Him. Oh, that you would think of this! Before our Lord passes on and leaves you to your own devices, I would have you know that the King of Heaven has been very near to you! Oh that you would cry out to Him, nor cease the cry till He comes and abides with you!

I. This must suffice for an introduction. Oh that the Spirit of God may give the sermon! My subject runs thus—First, observe in the text, COMPANIONS LIKELY TO PART. The walk had come to an end, for they had reached Emmaus where they were going and now the Master made as though He would have gone further. And so the holy talk was likely to end. Jesus is going on and they may never see Him again. The choicest of all conversations now draws to a close unless the Speaker can be induced to stop with the two favored travelers. We are told that our Lord Jesus would have gone further. He did not pretend that He would have gone, but He was actually going. It is the way of Him not to stay anywhere unless He is invited and pressed. I know not where He would have gone, but with that glorified body of His, He was under no necessity of finding shelter!

He could have gone further and lodged elsewhere, or He could have suddenly returned to Jerusalem and in a moment have entered into the Apostles' meeting room though the doors were shut. It would not have been the first night that—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air Witnessed the fervor of His prayer."

Certainly He would have gone further. He says not where, but He knew right well. Under the circumstances, He and His companions seemed likely to part. Now, observe the reason of parting. They were not about to separate because of any ill-will on the part of those who had walked with Him. No anger had broken out—nothing that He had said had awakened any animosity— very, very far from it! They felt an intense reverence for the unknown Stranger and sincere gratitude to Him for the charming words which He had addressed them. He was likely to have gone further, but not because of any argument between them.

Nor would they have parted because of any weariness of Him on their part. He had not talked away and tired them out so that they would be glad to see the back of Him. The rest of the narrative shows that they were in a very different condition of heart from that. If Jesus had gone further, they would have lost His delightful society through forgetfulness. Turning into his house—for I suppose one of them lived there and there does not appear to have been anybody else in the house—one of them spread the simple repast for his friend. And what if in his care about the evening meal he had forgotten to invite the wonderful Stranger? If Jesus had gone further, it would have been entirely because they forgot to invite Him, or failed to urge Him to stay! They could not have felt an utter indifference to Him, but they might have forgotten to press their hospitality upon Him. Many have short memories when hospitality is concerned. Sometimes we have failed to invite a friend when he needed our kindness—and we have felt sorry for it afterwards. They might have supposed that if He went further, so important a Person was too great to tarry with them and, perhaps, so wise a Person had an errand further on which required immediate dispatch and, therefore, He could not remain with them. Thus they might have let Him go. Had they lost Him it would have been simply through forgetfulness and inadvertence. Brothers and Sisters, I hope there are very few of us, who love the Lord, who are likely ever to lose communion with Him through any weariness of Him, or distaste of Him.

Oh no—the happiest moments we have ever had have been spent in Jesus' company—and we are never so blessed as when He opens the Scriptures to us and opens our hearts to receive them. But we are in danger lest in the press of worldly cares; lest in our frequent conversations with our fellow men; lest, even, in our attendances upon the domestic concerns of our own little home, we may forget to invite Jesus to abide with us! Communion with the Lord is more often broken by lack of thought than by lack of heart, though, alas, when the lack of thought has let Him, "go further," then it has cooled down into that rock of ice which we have called a lack of heart. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, let us charge our hearts that we never forget to entertain the Savior.

Let this be our first thought—that we give Jesus a lodging in our souls. Be this our morning prayer, "Abide with us." Be this our evening petition, "Abide with us." Be this the prayer all day long, "Abide with us." May we resolve that under no circumstances will we permit our souls to be at rest unless we rest in Him, or to be happy except He shall be our joy! You see, if the two disciples had lost our Lord's company, it would have been simply through neglect. And if you and I lose Him, it may be through a neglect which we think excusable because we were so very busy and so intensely occupied. But this will not alter the fact, nor bring back our Lord. Oh do not let us treat Him so badly! Are there other objects beneath the sun or above the sun, on earth or in Heaven, that are worthy to come between us and Christ for a single moment? Will a wife treat her loving husband with coldness and then excuse herself that she had other matters on her hands? It may be so, but never, never let the Lord's redeemed treat their Redeemer as though He might be left in any hole or corner till a more convenient time!

The point at which they were at all likely to part company with Christ is worth noting, for it may give us timely warning. It was, first, a point of change. They had been walking with Him and the journey was over. They had been out of doors, but now they have come to their house and are about to enter. Always there is a danger to us of missing fellowship with Christ at points of change—and especially at seasons of greatly altered circumstances. I do not wish, Brethren, that you and I should be often transplanted—trees do not flourish well when this happens to them. I knew a friend who appeared to be wedded to the Gospel and was zealous in promoting it when he was persecuted very severely by his father. His father died and he inherited the old man's property—and from that hour he was not seen in his former place—nor did he manifest any love to the Lord. This is sad.

I would hardly dare to pray for some men that they might have a change from persecution to prosperity—plants that flourish amid ice and snow are burned up when placed beneath a tropical sun. I have known those who appeared to love their Master right heartily when they were poor! They have become rich and now where is their ardor? I hope they have not altogether cast off affection for the sacred name, but certainly the people with whom they once associated know nothing of them, now, and they are not engaged in those holy works in which they formerly delighted. How dare I pray for the temporal prosperity of those who would degenerate beneath its influence?

On the other hand, I have known many who once were in comfortable circumstances and when prosperous they appeared to walk with God. As far as we could judge, they were patterns of godliness. But they fell upon hard times and they grew poorer and poorer till they tasted the

bitterness of need—and now they say they do not like to be seen by those who knew them and, therefore, they stay away from the House of God. They have lost the comforts of religion when they most need them! They have lost worldly substance and, alas, lost fellowship with Christ as well! This is equally sad, for whether Jesus leaves us at the golden gate, or at the broken-down door of poverty, His departure is equally a calamity! I am mentioning facts. I give no names, but I have seen these things many times and, therefore, I have drawn this deduction, that at points of change there is danger. I suppose there is upon the railway a measure of peril at the switches where the train is turned upon another line—and it is certainly so on the Mal. line to Glory. At all times it is well to watch, but especially when we are entering upon new duties, new trials, new temptations. Lord, let not the novelty of our position fascinate us even for a moment, but evermore You abide with us!

It was a point, too, where something had been accomplished. They had finished their journey and reached their homes. Oh, we are such poor things that we can hardly complete anything without being self-satisfied. As little a thing as a finished walk will exalt little minds. But if it is some greater work, the peril is increased. When Christ said, "It is finished," He opened a river of comfort. But when we exclaim, "I have finished it," we too often set our minds on fire with pride! Certain men have undertaken a work for Jesus and they have done it by the Holy Spirit's blessing—and now they feel so pleased with themselves and so satisfied that they are likely to spoil all and give their Lord occasion for grief! The lowly Jesus does not seek self-exalting companions! I have known Him go many a mile to speak with the contrite, and it is His delight to dwell with the brokenhearted—but with those who have done something and, therefore, feel that they do not further need His Presence, He soon parts company. Nothing drives Christ and holy angels out of a room like the foul odor of pride!

Then, dear Friends, they were now about to rest for a time. They had reached home and they looked for repose after the excitements of the week. They had been detained at Jerusalem by grand, yet terrible events, and one of them was glad, that day, to lodge in his own house. As for the other, he was glad to get out of the city and retire with his friend, for a little till good news should come from the Apostles. They both hoped for a little peace. Just then the Master made as though He would have gone further—and when you and I are promising ourselves repose, such as we have known little of upon earth—it is especially well, at such times, to ask the Master to abide with us!

When we are in the battle we are sure to beg Him to abide with us because He covers our head and we cannot live without Him. And when we are proceeding in a weary walk we are likely to pray Him to remain with us, for we are then leaning on our Beloved. But when we sit down upon the seat of ease, sleep too often creeps over us. Having put off our traveling sandals and stretched ourselves at ease—ah, then there is the possibility, the sad possibility—of the Master's going further while we take our rest. He is always going further and when we resolve to go no further, but to consider ourselves to have attained, then our Lord will soon be gone! We must not take the slogan of the famous statesman who has been so often laughed at for his finality—we must not say, "Rest and be thankful"— or we shall soon come to grief. If we fall into that vein, it is well to remember that just at such a point Jesus and the disciple are apt to break fellowship. I mention this that we may be wise in the hour of trial.

Now, had they parted company, the act would have been most blameworthy on their part. To have lost the society of such a Friend, how foolish! Here was One who had instructed them with tenderness and skill— One who spoke as never man spoke—would they let Him go? Here was One who evidently could explain their mysterious sorrows and take the sting out of their grief—would they let Him pass on? They had been fools, indeed, if they had done so! It would have shown that they did not appreciate His teaching, nor feel grateful for His opening to them the Scriptures. It would have been gross folly!

And yet there is another thought. It was toward evening, and night was lowering and, therefore, they said, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening." It would have been very cruel to have allowed Him to journey on in the dark and the dews. Would we thus treat any friend of ours? Could we allow a beloved one to abide abroad all night? Was not that His own argument in the Golden Canticle, when He knocked and said, "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled: for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night"? It would have been inhospitable on their part—inhuman for them to leave Him to continue His journey in the darkness of the gathering night when they had a home in which they could entertain Him!

And so I charge it upon my own soul to never let Jesus be left unhoused; a Stranger who has not where to lay His head! All hearts are cold in every place towards the Well-Beloved! It is a cold world for Jesus, today, even as at the time of His life below. Then, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Let not that be said over, again, and said of us who are, in a more special sense, His own than were His brothers and sisters according to the flesh. "Be you not forgetful to entertain strangers" is a Gospel command—but be you especially eager to entertain your Lord! Shall your Lord ever say to any of you who are called Christians, "I was a stranger, and you took Me not in"? Oh, no! Let us invite Him, beg Him, entreat Him, constrain Him to abide with us for His own dear sake—and let us give Him, in our warm hearts, the best entertainment that we can!

Surely we never received such a guest, before, and another such we shall never see again! Men are willing to give up their estates and houses for a time to entertain royalty—they reckon them to be increased in value when once a monarch has sojourned in them—and shall not we be more than willing to open wide our hearts, minds and homes, that Jesus may enter and be entertained by us as the King of kings? There is something, then, to be learned from companions likely to part. May the Holy Spirit sweetly teach us!

II. Now, I change the scene, and notice, next—THE GUEST NEEDING TO BE PRESSED. The guest is Jesus and He is about to go further. And He will go further unless they invite Him, yes, unless, according to the 29th verse, they constrain Him. It is a very strong word that, "they constrained Him." It is akin to the one which Jesus used when He said, "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence." They not only invited Him, but they held Him, they grasped His hand, they tugged at His clothes—they said He should not go. They would not have it—the cold night should not accuse them of being churls. He should not go another yard along that dangerous road—they must have Him for a guest—and they would not take no for an answer!

Let us remember why this Guest needs constraining, and the first thought is, He could not very well have tarried, otherwise. If I were a stranger and walked along the road with two persons who did not know me—if I were able to talk to them ever so instructively—I should not think of intruding into their house when the conversation was over! You never see anything in Jesus approaching

roughness or want of delicacy—He exhibits the manners of the noblest Man that ever lived! He does not force His acquaintance upon any, but He goes where He is constrained. Besides, what pleasure could it have been for Him or for them for Him to have lodged in their house if He had not been wanted? Without a welcome, few of us would care to accept a lodging. Jesus, therefore, naturally, because the other thing was scarcely feasible, waited till He was asked and even pressed. And had they not constrained Him, He would have gone further.

Remark that this is a characteristic of the Son of God at all times. I have not time, this morning, otherwise I could show you that all through the Old Testament as well as the New, when the Lord reveals Himself in any visible form, He has to be pressed before He will abide with any. The Lord came to Abraham and Abraham said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray You, from Your servant: let a little water, I pray You, be fetched, and wash Your feet, and rest Yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort Your hearts; after that You shall pass on: for therefore are You come to your servant" (Genesis 18:3-5). Abraham constrains these wondrous guests, or otherwise they will pass on!

Look at chapter 19 and see what Lot did when two angels came to him. Even supposing these were nothing more than angels, they show the manners of the court of Heaven, so that it is an equally good illustration for me. He said, "Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and you shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, No; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house" (vs. 2, 3). Joseph was, in this, a type of Jesus, for you know how slow he seemed to reveal himself to his brothers, though all the while he was full of love to them. To Moses the Lord said, "Let Me alone," and only by mighty pleading could the man of God prevail!

When an angel came to Manoah and his wife, to tell them about Samson, we find that He had to be detained, or else He would have departed speedily. "And Manoah said unto the Angel of the Lord, I pray You, let us detain You, until we shall have made ready a kid for You." (Judges 13:15-16). You see, the heavenly messenger needed to be detained, or He would have gone at once. And then comes in that instance of which you have already thought, when the angel said to Jacob, "Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me." It is clear that the Lord will be entreated of by the house of Israel to do good things for them. We shall have to cry—

"In vain You struggle to get free, I never will unloose my hold! Are You the Man that died for me? The secret of Your love unfold: Wrestling, I will not let You go, Till I Your name, Your nature know. I know You, Savior, who You are, Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend; Nor will You with the night depart, But stay and love me to the end; Your mercies never shall remove Your nature and Your name is Love."

We know that our Lord had a shy habit—He often withdrew Himself—and the multitude sought after Him. He walked upon the sea and they in the vessel saw Him and He would have gone by them, but they cried out to Him. The Syro-Phoenician woman, who sought for the healing of her daughter, found Him, at first, very cold to her, and only by the greatest faith did she win her desire! He needed earnest pressure before He yielded to her request.

The blind men cried unto Him for sight, but He passed on till louder and louder went up their piteous cries, and they held Him, for Jesus stood still. The nobleman, when he came about his son, pleaded with tears till he cried, "Lord, come down before my child dies." It has been often so with our gracious Lord. He would not come until He saw that the desire for Him was intense. He gives us two parables—one tells us of the man in bed who must be awakened with many a knock and many a call before he would rise to give bread to his friend who sought it. The other parable is that of the unjust judge who must be wearied by the woman's importunate entreaties before he will vindicate her cause. From all this you see it is the Master's habit to hold back till He is pressed and constrained.

If we must give a reason for this I would remind you of the jealousy of His Character. He is jealous of our love! He says, "Give Me your heart," and so He pauses a while that He may see that we love Him and prize His benefits. Of old the Father said, "The Lord your God is a jealous God," and Jesus, the Incarnation of the Divine Love, has told us that, "love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave" and, therefore, it is that He will not give His company to those who have no heart for it. You shall not have His smiles if the smiles of the world will do as well. If union with worldlings will please you as much as union with Him, you shall have none of His company! It is only when you languish for Him, sigh for Him and cry for Him that He will abide with you!

He has another reason and that is, His anxiety to do us good! He wisely wishes that we should value the mercy which He gives by being led to consider what a case we should be in if He did not give it. He stirs up our prayers and then answers them—and so we get a double blessing—the prayers, themselves, being of much service to us, and then the answer being all the more a blessing! It was good to these two disciples to be allowed to be hospitable. It was good for them to rouse themselves to entreat Him. They valued the company of Jesus all the more when they had diligently persuaded Him to sit at their table and partake of their simple meal.

Now, Beloved, let us look at Jesus in this light, and say within ourselves, "I am fearful lest I should do anything to excite His jealousy. And I am anxious to show my eager longing for His Presence lest He should think me unkind. I would not make Him 'go further' and leave me, but I would hold Him fast, constraining Him to abide with me."

III. I have said that here was a Guest who needed pressing—there will be no necessity to enlarge upon the remark that here was A GUEST WORTH PRESSING. He was, indeed, worth pressing when we consider what He had done for them. He had given them comfort and instruction and He was worth detaining if only for that. Had they known Him they would have felt still more that they could not let Him go. Would they not have borne Him on their shoulders into the house and said, "Good Master, we cannot think of letting You go, for You are He whom our souls love—our Master and our Lord—over whom we have been mourning as one dead, and lo, You are alive"? So much were they indebted to Him that they could not fail to make Him their guest!

They must press Him again, for how comfortless the house would have been without Him! I think I see those two disciples sitting down to their meal, supposing the Master had gone on. Suddenly, one would have remembered, and said, "My heart feels heavy, now that He is gone." And the other would have said, "How came it that we let Him go? Why did we not entreat Him to stay the night with us?" Their meal would have half choked them! They would have gone to their beds and tossed about throughout a sleepless night if they had failed in hospitality to Him. This is what has

happened to some of us when we have carelessly let our Lord slip away— we have been like widows who have newly lost their husbands—sore in heart and desolate.

"Should the children of the bridegroom fast?" Not while the bridegroom is with them! But if he is taken from them, then shall they fast. Better to have been outside in the open air, or to have gone further with the unknown Traveler, than to have been comfortably housed and to have treated Him ill. He was a Guest worth constraining to remain when we think of the vacuum there would have been if He had gone further! Besides, we know what they did not then know, that this unknown One would make Himself known to them, as He has done to us. Knowing Him, now, as they knew Him afterwards in the breaking of the bread, we ought to feel, we must feel, we do feel, that we cannot, will not let Him go, but will detain Him, for He is Christ our Lord!

I spoke at the beginning to some here who have never known our Lord and yet He has been very close to them frequently, in hearing sermons and the like. Dear Friends, I earnestly beseech you to receive Christ as a Stranger, and you shall soon know Him as a Friend! You only know of my Lord, that He makes you have the heartburn every now and then. And when we talk about Him, you go home very uncomfortable. How I wish that you knew Him better! Oh, that you would entertain Him, for then you would know His excellence! Bid Him come into your heart and He will be infinitely more to you than He is now.

You have no idea what He is. He seems a well-spoken Friend, but He will prove to be a Brother! He promises to instruct you, but He will love you, enrich you, and glorify you. Oh dear child of God, not yet wellinstructed, your eyes are weak and you see not Jesus as you shall see Him! Still, I pray you heartily entertain the Savior, even if your eyes are blind. Take Him in and let Him lodge with you, and you will know more and yet more of Him! You will know most of Him as you break your bread to the hungry, and so break it to Him. You will know more as you break the bread at the Communion Table and so commune with Him. Only remember, He is a Guest worth pressing, and be sure you do your best humbly, but earnestly, to detain Him!

IV. I close by telling you of AN ARGUMENT WITH WHICH TO HOLD HIM. Here it is in the text. "They constrained Him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." My first way of using this text does not commend itself to my judgment, but yet it is necessary. All the commentators and preachers I have ever met with suppose that these disciples meant, by this argument, that it was dreary for themselves to be alone and, therefore, for their own comfort and protection, they begged the stranger to remain. I do not believe it for a moment! Still, that would have been a good argument with the tender-hearted Savior and if you and I cannot attain to anything else, let us use that plea.

It is toward evening with many of you. You are in affliction and the shadows thicken. Your light has departed and you are afraid. Sorrows come on like the darkness of night. You know not what approaches—you are heavy of heart. Ah, then that is a blessed prayer— "Fast falls the eventide! The darkness thickens: Lord, abide with me."

You can bear any trouble with Christ. No adversities shall hurt you, no afflictions shall grieve your spirit if He is with you. Pray, therefore, this prayer, and no longer fear as you enter into the cloud. Or it may be that some of you are falling into depression of spirit through the loss of the Light of God's Countenance. You are not as joyful a Christian as you used to be. The high felicities of your

spirit have burned down and all is dim. Now is the time to say, "Lord, abide with me. If I have no joy, still let me have Yourself." It is a blessed thing when a Believer does not set his affection so much upon the joy of the Lord as upon the Lord of his joy—when he says not only, "Lord, I will rejoice in You while You smile," but cries with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Better to have to do with a killing God than to have God gone!

So, cry, "Lord, if I never get a smile from You; if I am never again cheered and comforted by You; if I never sing a hymn of gladness, yet still abide with me! Be near, even if I know it not." It was a beautiful expression of David, who often asked the Lord to shine upon him, when he said, "In the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice." As much as to say—If I have no light from God's face, I will be glad to be hidden beneath His wings. Abide with me, then, even if my reason almost fails me, and my darkened soul dreads a yet more tremendous night. Abide with me, O Lord, even should my sorrow seal my eyes in death. "Abide with me" is a blessed prayer for those Believers who are getting aged. With them it is toward evening and the day is far spent. Now should they cry, "Abide with me." Then will you sweetly go to your chamber and fall into your last, most blessed sleep, and obtain the fulfillment of yours prayer that you may be forever with the Lord.

I have used the text in this way because everybody has used it so, but I believe that these disciples meant it in quite another sense. They used the argument to detain Christ because it was evening, for His sake—because the night was coming on and they could not think of His being out in it. They knew how heavy the Eastern dews are and so they pressed Him with this—"Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Let each one of us use that argument with our Lord even now—Lord, the world has no entertainment for You! Unbelieving hearts give You no shelter. The self-righteous repel You from their doors. The worldly see no beauty in You; carnal hearts refuse You; every house is locked against You! Therefore come in and abide with me. Here is lodging for You! Come in, Blessed One, and stay with me. If You lack shelter in king's palaces, abide with me! If there is no room for You in the inn, yet come in here and find Yourself at home, for I shall count myself greatly honored by receiving You. Therefore, dear Master, abide with me.

How we ought to long to cheer the Blessed One with our love because He is still so despised and rejected everywhere else. Everywhere else they treat Him ill. O do not let Him be wounded in the house of His friends! If He had 50 houses to go to, I might say, "Lord, they can give You better entertainment than lies in my power." But when it is "toward evening" and no other door is open, Lord come into my poor cottage! I will set all that I have before You and be Your willing servant. That is the plea!

Another form of the plea is this. The ages are growing old and dark. What a plea that is for the Church to put up now, for the coming of her Lord. "O Lord, it is toward evening, the world's sun is setting. It is nearly 1,900 years since you ascended and still, the world lies in the Wicked One! Lord, come to Your Church! Come and abide with her, for as the world grows old, good Master, a chill night comes on and the love of many waxes cold—and there are some that turn aside who once ran well. Dire evils walk abroad in the dark and blasphemy and rebuke are rife! Good Master, come unto Your Church and dwell in her, and find, there, Your home!

"And the night of all nights is coming on, even the end of the world. We know not when, but we know we are getting nearer to it every day. Earth's day is far spent. Her day of mercy comes toward its eventide and the night draws on, therefore, Master, come and abide with us, that we

may win the world for you. Come, come that we may convert the heathen to Your Cross and that You may have them for Your inheritance. It is with Your Church that You will do this! Come, then, and abide with her ministers and her missionaries, and all her living membership, that yet the prophecies may be accomplished and Your purpose may be fulfilled! And Your reward may be the salvation of Your own."

Is not that a good missionary text, after all, a blessed prayer with which to begin this missionary week—"Abide with us for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent"? In the Romish church there is a chant which they use from Easter to the day of Ascension, and though I care nothing for liturgies or anything of the sort, yet it is certainly a suggestive canticle. The first line of the chant is—

"Abide with us. Hallelujah."

And the next is—

"For it is toward evening, And the day is far spent. Hallelujah."

With that I close. May we use that argument well, until our Lord shall, in very deed, abide with us!

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Luke 24,31 #681 - Eyes Opened copy

EYES OPENED

NO. 681

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 18, 1866,

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

"And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water."

Genesis 21:19.

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him."

Luke 24:31.

The Fall of man was most disastrous in its results to our entire being. "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die," was no idle threat, for Adam did die the moment that he transgressed the command—he died the great spiritual death by which all his spiritual powers became then and evermore, until God should restore them, absolutely dead. I said all the spiritual powers, and if I divide them after the analogy of the senses of the body, my meaning will be still more clear.

Through the Fall the spiritual taste of man became perverted so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He chooses the poison of Hell and loathes the bread of Heaven. He licks the dust of the serpent and rejects the food of angels. The spiritual hearing became grievously injured, for man naturally no longer hears God's Word but stops his ears at his Maker's voice. Let the Gospel minister charm ever so wisely, yet the unconverted soul, like the deaf adder, hears not the charmer's voice. The spiritual feeling by virtue of our depravity is fearfully deadened. That which would once have filled the man with alarm and terror no longer excites emotion.

Even the spiritual smell with which man should discern between that which is pure and holy and that which is unsavory to the most High has become defiled. Now man's spiritual nostrils, while unrenewed, derive no enjoyment from the sweet savor which is in Christ Jesus but seeks after the putrid joys of sin. As with other senses so is it with man's sight. He is so spiritually blind that things most plain and clear he cannot and will not see. The understanding, which is the soul's eye, is covered with scales of ignorance and when these are removed by the finger of instruction, the visual orb is still so affected that it only sees men as trees walking.

Our condition is thus most terrible, but at the same time it affords ample room for a display of the splendors of Divine Grace. We are so naturally and entirely ruined, that if saved, the whole work must be of God, and the whole Glory must form the head of the Triune Jehovah. There must not only be a Christ lifted up of whom it can be said, "There is life in a look at the crucified One," but that very look, itself, must be given to us or else in vain should Christ hang upon the Cross!

I. Taking Hagar's case first, I shall address myself this morning to certain unconverted ones who are in a hopeful condition.

1. Taking Hagar's case as the model to work upon, we may see in her and in many like her a preparedness for mercy. In many respects she was in a fit state to become an object of mercy's help. She had a strong sense of need. The water was spent in the bottle, she herself was ready to faint and her child lay at death's door. This sense of need was attended by vehement desires. It is a very hard thing to bring a sinner to long after Christ—so hard that if a sinner does really long and thirst after Jesus— the Spirit of God must have been secretly at work in his soul, begetting and fostering those desires.

When the invitation is given, "Ho, every one that thirsts," you can honestly say, "That means me." That precious Gospel invitation, "Whoever will, let him come," is evidently yours, for you will it eagerly and vehemently. The Searcher of all hearts knows that there is no objection in your heart either to be saved or to the way of being saved—no, rather you sometimes lift your hands to Heaven and say, "O God, would that I might say, 'Christ for me!' " You know that the water of life is desirable—you know more than that—you pine with an inward desire to drink of it. Your soul is now in such a state that if you do not find Jesus you never will be happy without Him. God has brought you into such a condition that you are like the magnetized needle which has been turned away from the pole by the finger of some passerby, and it cannot rest until it gets back to its place.

Your constant cry is, "Give me Christ! Give me Christ, or else I die!" This is hopeful, but let me remind you that it, alone, will not save you. The discovery of a leak in a vessel may be preparatory to the pumping of the ship, and to the repair of the leak—but the discovery of the leak will not of itself keep the boat afloat. The fact that you have a fever is well for you to know, but to groan under that fever will not restore you to health. To desire after Christ is a very blessed symptom, but mere desires will not bring you to Heaven! You may be hungering and thirsting after Christ, but hungering and thirsting will not save you! You must have Christ! Your salvation does not lie in your hungering and thirsting, nor in your humbling, nor in your praying—salvation is in Him who died upon the Cross—and not anything in you.

Like Hagar you are humbled, and brought to despair. There was a time when you did not admit your need of a Savior. You found comfort enough in ceremonies, and in your own prayers, repentances, and so on. But now the water is spent in your bottle and you are sitting down with Hagar wringing your hands and weeping in despair—a blessed despair! God bring you all to it! Despair is next door to confidence in Christ! Rest assured, until we are empty Jesus will never fill us! Until we are stripped He will never clothe us! Until self is dead Christ will not live in us!

It is quite certain that in Hagar's case the will was right enough with reference to the water. It would have been preposterous, indeed, to say to Hagar, "If there is water are you willing to drink?" "Willing?" she would say, "look at my parched lips, hear my dolorous cries, look at my poor panting, dying child! How can you ask a mother if she is willing to have water while her babe is perishing for thirst?" And so with you. If I were to propose to you the question, "Are you willing to be saved?" you might look me in the face and say, "Willing? Oh Sir, I have long passed beyond that stage! I am panting, groaning, thirsting, fainting, dying to find Christ! If He would come to me this morning I would not only open both the gates of my heart and say, 'Come in,' but the gates are opened now before He comes. And my soul is saying, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that

I might even come to His seat!' "

All this is hopeful, but I must again remind you that to will to be rich does not make a man rich, and that to will to be saved cannot in itself save you. Panting after health does not restore the sick man though it may set him upon using the means, and so he may be healed. And with you, your panting after salvation cannot save you—you must get beyond all this to the great Physician Himself.

2. In the second place, mercy was prepared for Hagar, and is prepared for those in a like state. There was water. She thought it was a wilderness without a drop for her to drink, but there was water. Troubled Conscience, there is pardon! You think it is all judgment, thunder and thunderbolts, curses and wrath, but it is not so. There is mercy! Jesus died. God is able justly to forgive sinners. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He is a God ready to pardon, ready to forgive! There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. There is water, there is mercy. What is more, there is mercy for you! There is not only that general mercy which we are bound to preach to every creature, but for many of you whom I have described I am persuaded that there is special mercy.

Your names are in His Book. He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world, though you do not know it. You shall be His—you ARE His! The hour is not far distant, when, washed in the fountain and made clean, you shall cast yourselves at the Savior's feet and be His captives in the bonds of love forever. There is mercy for you now if you trust Jesus!

The water was not created as a new thing to supply Hagar's thirst—it was there already. If she could have seen it she might have had it before, but she could not see it. There is mercy, there is mercy for you. All that is wanted is that you should see it, poor troubled Conscience, and if you could have seen it there would have been no necessity whatever that you should have been so long a time as you have been in despair, and doubt, and fear. The water was near to Hagar, and so is Christ near to you. The mercy of God is not a thing to be sought for up yonder among the stars, nor to be discovered in the depths—it is near you, it is even in your mouth and in your heart!

The Savior who walked along the streets of Jerusalem is in these aisles and in these pews—a God ready to forgive, waiting to be gracious. Do not think of my Master as though He had gone up to Heaven out of your reach and had left no mercy behind Him. Let Him tell you that He is as near in spirit now as He was to the disciples when He spoke to them at Emmaus. Oh that you could see Him! He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." He is passing by! Cry to Him, you blind man, and you shall receive your sight! Call to Him, you deaf! Speak, even you whose lips are dumb—His ears can hear your soul's desires! He is near—only believe in His Presence and trust His Grace—and you shall see Him.

It is a notion abroad that the act of faith is very mysterious. Now faith, so far as it is an act of man, (and an act of man it most certainly is, as well as the gift of God, for "with the heart men believe"), is one of the simplest acts of the human intellect. To trust Jesus, to lean with the soul upon Him—just as with my body I am leaning on this rail—to make Him all my confidence and all my rest needs no learning, no previous education. It needs no straining or mental effort. It is such an action that the babe and the suckling may glorify God by it!

The faith of Sir Isaac Newton, with all his learning, is not a whit more saving or less simple than the faith of the child of three years old, if brought to rest on Christ alone. The moment the dying thief looked to the Crucified and said, "Lord remember me," he was as saved as Paul, when he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." I am very anxious to be understood, and therefore I am trying to speak very simply, and to talk right home to those whom I am driving at.

My own case is to the point. I was for some few years, as a child, secretly seeking Jesus. If ever heart knew what the bitter anguish of sin was, I did. And when I came to understand the plan of salvation by the simple teaching of a plain, illiterate man, the next thought I had after joy that I was saved, was this—"What a fool I was not to trust Jesus Christ before!" I concluded that I never could have heard the Gospel, but I think I was mistaken. I think I must have heard the Gospel thousands of times, but did not understand it. I was like Hagar with my eyes closed. We are bound to tell you every Sunday that trusting Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, but after you have heard that 50,000 times, you really will not even understand what we mean by it till the Spirit of God reveals the secret.

But when you do but know it and trust in Jesus, simply as a child would trust his father's word, you will say of yourself, "How could it be? I was thirsty with the water rippling at my feet! I was famishing and perishing for hunger, and the bread was on the table! I was fretting as though there were no entrance into Heaven, but there stood the door wide open right before me, if I could but have seen it!" "Trust Christ, and He must save you." I will improve upon it: "Trust Him, you are saved." The moment you begin to live by faith in His dear Son, there is not a sin left in God's book against you!

3. We pass on, then, in the third place, to notice that although Hagar was prepared and mercy was prepared, yet there was an impediment in the way for she could not see the water. There is also an impediment in your way. Hagar had a pair of bright beaming eyes, I will be bound to say, and yet she could not see the water. And men may have first-rate understandings, but not understand that simple thing—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not suffer so much from lack of power to understand faith as from a kind of haze which hovers over your eyes to prevent their looking into the right place. You continue to imagine that there must be something very singular for us to feel in order to have eternal life.

Now this is all a mistake! Simple trust in Jesus has this difficulty in it—it is not difficult—and therefore the human mind refuses to believe that God can intend to save us by so simple a plan. What blindness is this! So foolish and so fatal! Is not this ignorance partly caused by legal terrors? Master Bunyan, who had a keen insight into spiritual experience, says that Christian was so troubled with the burden on his back that in running he did not look well enough to his steps. Therefore, being much tumbled up and down in his own mind, as he says, he also tumbled into the Slough of Despond. You may have heard the thunder of God's Law so long that you cannot hear anything so soft and sweet as the invitation of the loving Jesus. "Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" is unheard because of the din of your sins.

The main reason I think why some do not attain early to peace is because they are looking for more than they will get and thus their eyes are dazzled with fancies. You who dare not take Christ because you are not a full-grown Christian, be content to be a babe first! Be satisfied to go through

the seed state, and the blade state, and the ear state, and then you will get to be the full corn in the ear! Be content to begin with Christ and with Christ, alone. I verily believe some of you expect that you will experience a galvanic shock, or a superhuman delirium of horror. You have an idea that to be born-again is something to make the flesh creep or the bones shiver—an indescribable sensation, quite out of the compass of human feeling.

Now believe, that to be born-again involves the ending of superstition and living by feeling, and brings you into the world of plain and simple truth where fools need not err. "Whoever believe in Him is not condemned." If you can understand that and claim it as your own, you are born-again. But though you should understand all human mysteries, if you are not born-again you could not truly understand that simplest of all teachings, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Again, I am afraid some persons with the water at their feet do not drink it because of the bad directions that are given by ministers. When a minister closes up an address to the unconverted with this exhortation— "Now, my dear Friends, go home and pray," that is a very right exhortation—but it is given to the wrong people, and in the wrong place. I do not say to you this morning, I dare not say to you, as though it were the Gospel message, "Go home and pray." I hope you will pray! But there is another matter to come before prayer, namely, faith in Jesus!

When Christ told His disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, He did not say to them, "He that prays shall be saved," though that would be true if he prayed aright. But Christ said, "he that believes shall be saved." Your present duty is not praying, but believing. You are to look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross just as the poor serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent and lived. Your praying will not do you a farthing's worth of good if you refuse to trust Jesus Christ. When you have trusted Jesus Christ prayer will become your breath, your native air—you will not be able to live without it! But prayer, if put in the place of a child-like trust in Jesus, becomes an antichrist.

It is not going to places of worship, or Bible reading which saves. I am not depreciating these duties but I am putting them in their proper position. It is depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone which is the true vital act by which the soul is quickened into spiritual life. If you, trusting in Christ, do not find peace and pardon, the Gospel which I preach is a lie and I will renounce it! But then the Bible would be false, also, for it is from that Book my message comes. This is the Gospel which we have received and which Christ has sent us to preach—that whoever believes in Him is not condemned.

Now why do you hurry about after this and that? Why follow this man's and that man's directions? Why look to your baptism and confirmation? Why do you go about to your Church-goings and your Chapel-goings, your Bible-readings and your praying, your good works about this and about the other—they are all but dross and dung if you put them in the place of Christ! But Christ Jesus, if you rest on Him, is precious, and after your receive Him, your works and your prayers shall become precious, too, because they will be performed through faith in Him. But until you come to Him, they are all nothing and vanity—unacceptable in the sight of God— because you put them into the place which should be occupied by the Savior.

4. I feel certain that there are some here upon whom the Lord intends to work this morning—so we will speak, in the fourth place, upon the Divine removal of the impediment. Hagar's blindness was

removed by God. No one else could have removed it. God must open a man's eyes to un

stand practically what belief in Jesus Christ is. That simple T uth of derstand practically what belief inJesus Christ is. That simple Trruth of

God—salvation by trust in Jesus Christ—still remains a point too hard to be seen. Until the whole power of Omnipotence is made to bear upon the intellect man does not really comprehend it!

But while this was Divinely removed, it was removed instrumentally. An angel spoke out of Heaven to Hagar. It matters little whether it is an angel or a man—it is the Word of God which removes the difficulty. Dear Friend, I pray that the Word of God may remove your unbelief. May you see today the light of Jesus Christ by simply trusting Him! I believe there are some who are saved who still are afraid they will be lost. I have heard of a butcher who, at his work, was accustomed to put his candle in a little candlestick which was tied by a belt around his forehead. One day he needed his candle in his hand and he looked all around his slaughterhouse for it by the light of the candle on his forehead. He looked about everywhere to fine it and, of course, he could not have looked at all if he had not had the light which he looked for already! Many a man is looking within himself to see the evidence of Divine Grace when his anxiety and the very light by which he looks ought to be sufficient evidence. I hope there are many of you who are just on the verge of salvation without knowing it.

I looked last Friday night at a very remarkable sight—the burning of a huge rug factory. I was returning home from my Master's work, when I saw a little blaze, and in an incredibly short time a volume of fire rolled up in great masses to the skies! Why did it blaze so suddenly? Why, because for months before many men had been busily employed in hanging up the rugs and saturating the building in combustible materials. I do not mean with the intention of starting a fire, but in the ordinary course of their work. And in due time, when the first spark came it immediately grew into a great sheet of flames.

So, sometimes, when the Gospel is faithfully preached, a sinner gets present peace and pardon and he is so full of joy that his friends cannot make him out, his progress is so rapid. But remember that God has been mysteriously at work months before in that man's heart—preparing his soul to catch the heavenly flame so that there was only a spark needed and then up rolled the flames to Heaven! Oh that I could be that spark to some heart in whom God has been working this morning—by HE alone can make me so! I noticed when that factory was on fire from top to bottom that it seemed to glow like pure gold, or like transparent glass, and then I expected to see it fall and, by-and-by, fall it did, for after about halfan-hour, all of a sudden, one timber went over and the whole mass fell with a tremendous crash!

I venture to compare that final crash with the actual salvation of a soul long prepared, by God's Grace, to receive it. The heart has been glowing with a Divine desire, a heavenly flame for even months and years, and then, at last, and in a moment, the final movement is made—and doubts and fears and sins fall to the ground—and there is room to build a Temple for the living God. May it be so with you this morning!

There has been much preparatory work in you, for you are brought to long after a Savior and you are desirous to be saved by Him. There He is! Take Him! Take Him! The cup of water is put before you. Drink it! No need to wash your mouth first, or to change your garments. Drink it at once!

Come to Jesus as you are!—

"Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

II. Oh that the Spirit of God would give me power from on high while I try to talk to the saints from the second case—that of the disciples in Luke 24:31. This is no Hagar, but "Cleopas and another disciples." And yet these two suffered under the same spiritual blindness as Hagar, though not, of course, in the same phase of it. Carefully observe the case of these disciples, for I believe it is often our own. They ought to have known Jesus for these reasons. They were acquainted with Him. They had been with Him for years in public and in private. They had heard His voice so often that they ought to have remembered its tones. They had gazed upon that marred face so frequently that they ought to have distinguished its features. They had been admitted into His privacy and they ought to have known His habits. That Savior walking there ought not to have been incognito to them though He was to the rest of men.

So it is with us. Perhaps you have not found Jesus Christ lately. You have been to His table and you have not met Him there. You are in a dark trouble this morning, and though He says, "It is I, be not afraid," yet you cannot see Him there. Brothers and Sisters, we ought to know Christ! We ought to discover Him at once. We know His voice. We have heard Him say, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away." We have looked into His face. We have understood the mystery of His grief. We have leaned our head upon His bosom. Some of you have had an experience of fifteen or twenty years, some of forty or fifty years—and yet, though Christ is near, you do not know Him this morning—and you are saying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"

They ought to have known Him because He was close to them. He was walking with them along the same road. He was not up on a mountain at a distance. Even then they ought to have known Him—but He was there in the same way with them! And at this hour Jesus is very near to us, sympathizing with all our griefs.

"In every pang that rends the heart, The Man of Sorrows has His part."

He bears and endures with us still, though now exalted in Glory's Throne in Heaven. If He is here, we ought to know Him. If He is close to His people every day and in all their affliction is afflicted, we ought to perceive Him. Oh, what poor vision is this, that Christ should be near, our own well-beloved Redeemer, and yet we should not be able to detect His Presence!

They ought to have seen Him because they had the Scriptures to reflect His Image, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious Book and turn over page after page of it and not see Christ. They talked concerning Christ from Moses to the end of the Prophets, and yet they did not see Jesus. Dear Child of God, are you in that state? He feeds among the lilies of the Word and you are among those lilies, and yet you do not see Him? He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the garden of Scripture but cannot see your Lord though He is there and is never absent?

What is more, these disciples ought to have seen Jesus, for they had the Scriptures opened to them. They not only heard the Word, but they understood it. I am sure they understood it, for their hearts burned within them while He spoke with them by the way. I have known what it is, and so

have you, to feel our hearts burn when we have been thinking of the precious Truth of God, and yet we have said, "Oh that I could get at Him!" You have heard of election, and you have wondered to yourself whether you should ever see again the face of God's first elect One. You have heard of the Atonement, and the mournful story of the Cross has ravished you. You have gone from page to page of Scripture doctrine and have received it and felt its influence, and yet that best of all enjoyments, communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, you have not comfortably possessed.

There was another reason why the disciples ought to have seen Him, namely that they had received testimonies from others about Him. "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women of our company, which were early at the sepulcher, made us astonished. For when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive." There He was close to them. Oh, it is so strange that in the ordinances of God's house Jesus should be there, and yet in sad intervals our hearts should get so cold and so worldly that we cannot see Him!

It is a blessed thing to want to see Him, but oh, it is better still to see Him. To those who seek Him He is sweet. But to those who find Him, He is dear beyond expression! In the Prayer Meeting you have heard some say, "If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now," and your hearts burned within you as they thus spoke, and yet you could not say the same yourself. You have been up in the sick-chamber, and you have heard the dying saint sing—

"I will love You in life, I will love You in death, And praise You as long as You lend me breath; And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow, If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now." You have envied that dying saint because you could not just then feel the same confident love.

Well this is strange, passing strange—it is amazing—a present Savior, present with His own disciples who have long known Him and who long to see Him—and yet their eyes are shut so that they cannot discover Him. Why do we not see Him? I think it must be ascribed in our case to the same as in theirs, namely, our unbelief. They evidently did not expect to see Him, and therefore they did not discover Him. Brethren, to a great extent in spiritual things we shall get what we expect. The ordinary preacher of the Gospel does not expect to see present conversions and he does not! But there are certain Brethren I have known who have preached with the full faith that God would convert souls and souls have been converted!

Some saints do not expect to see Christ. They read the life of Madame Guyon and her soul-enchanting hymns, and they say, "Ah, this was a blessed woman." They take down the letters of Samuel Rutherford, and when they read them through, they say, "Enchanting epistles! A strange, marvelously good man was this." It does not enter into their heads that they may be as Madam Guyon and that they may have as much nearness to Christ, and as much enjoyment as Samuel Rutherford! We have got into the habit of thinking the saints gone by stand up in elevated niches for us to stare at them with solemn awe, and fancy that we can never attain to their elevation.

Brothers and Sisters, they are elevated, certainly, but they beckon us to follow them, and point to a something beyond! They invite us to outstrip them, to get greater nearness to Christ, a clearer

sense of His love, and a more ravishing enjoyment of His Presence. You do not expect to see Christ, and therefore you do not see Him. Not because He is not there to be seen—but because your eyes are shut through your unbelief! I do not know any reason why we should not be full of joy this morning—every believing soul among us.

Why hang those harps on the willows, Beloved? You have a trial, you say. Yes, but Jesus is in it! He says, "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you." Why not rejoice then, since the dear Shepherd is with you? What matters it though there are clouds? They are full of rain when He is there, and they shall empty themselves upon the earth. Up, my Brothers and Sisters, up! With everything that may discourage and cast you down, you have 10 times as much to encourage and life you up! He love you and gave Himself for you. His blood has cleansed you. His righteousness has clothed you. His Grace has decked you with jewels. This world and the world to come are yours—and Christ who is better than both worlds—is yours forever and ever! Take down those harps and strike the strings with glad fingers—and wake them into melodies of joy! Now, dear Friends, I am sure it is the duty of every Christian, as well as his privilege, to walk in the conscious enjoyment of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be that you came here on purpose that you might begin such a walk. The disciples had walked a long way without knowing Christ, but when they sat at His table it was the breaking of bread that broke the evil charm, and they saw Jesus clearly at once. Do not neglect that precious ordinance of the breaking of bread! There is much more in it than some suppose. Sometimes when the preaching of the Word affords no joy, the breaking of bread might—and when reading the Word does not yield consolation—a resort to the Lord's Table might be the means of comfort.

It may even happen that some other neglected means may be that which God intends to bless to your soul. I am afraid many of God's servants are in darkness because they have neglected known duties. The windows of Christ's palace are many, and He would not have one of them blocked up. And if you block up one window, it may be that He will say, "I will never show My face at any but that. I will make My servants take down that shutter, that the Light of God may shine through." There is nothing in any ordinance of itself, but there may be much sin in your neglecting it. There is nothing, for instance, in the ordinance of Believers' Baptism, and yet, knowing it to be a prescribed duty in God's Word, it may be that the Lord will never give you a comfortable sense of His Presence till you yield to your conscience in that matter. But, waiving all that point, what you want is to see Him! Faith alone can bring you to see Him. Make it your prayer this morning, "Lord, open my eyes that I may see my Savior present with me. And after once seeing Him may I never let Him go. From this day forth may I begin, like Enoch, to walk with You, and may I continue walking with You till I die, that I may then dwell with You forever."

I find it very easy to get near to God compared with what it is to keep near. Enoch walked with God 400 years! What a long walk that was! What a splendid journey through life! Why should you not begin, dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, today, if you have not begun, and walk with God through the few years which remain? What if God should spare you for 40 years? I do not see that there is any necessity that your communion with God should be broken from now till death or the Lord's coming. "Yes," you say, "you talk in a Utopian fashion!" Perhaps I do, but I believe that hightoned Christian experience is, to a great extent, what common Christians think to be out of their reach.

Oh to get up above yon mists which dim the valley! Oh to climb the mountain's top which laughs in the sunlight! Oh to get away from the heavy atmosphere of worldliness and doubt, of fear, of care, of fretfulness—to soar away from the worldlings who are always earth-hunting, digging into its mines and prying after its treasures—and to get up there where God dwells in the innermost circle of heavenly seclusion—to get where none can live but men who have been quickened from among the dead! Where none can walk but men who are crucified with Christ, and who live only in Him! Oh to get up there where no more question concerning our security can molest us! Where no carking care can disturb because all is cast upon the Lord and rests wholly with Him! Oh to live in such an entireness of confidence and child-like faith that we will have nothing to do with anything except with serving Him and showing forth the gratitude we owe to Him who has done so much for us!

Get up, Believers! Get up to your high mountain! Leave your dunghills and assume your thrones! Cast off your sackcloth! Throw away your ashes and put on your scarlet apparel! Christ has called you to fellowship with Himself, and He is no longer in the grave—He is risen! Rise! He is ascended! Ascend with Him and learn what this means, "He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

I know you will say you cannot see this. However, it is there—most surely there! It is just the same as in Hagar's case, with you—the same but with a difference. The fullness of fellowship with Christ is attainable! It is close to you and if you have your eyes opened to see it, as it has been given you to see Jesus as your Savior, you may rejoice w with a joy unspeakable and full of glory! God do so to you and more, also, according to His Covenant goodness in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen.

PORTIONS SOF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Genesis 21:9-19; LIKE 24:13-31

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

Luke 24,36 #3456 - 'Peace Be Unto You'

"PEACE BE UNTO YOU"

NO. 3456

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 1915.

DELIVERED BY C H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 2, 1878.

"And as they thus spoke. . .Peace be unto you."

Luke 24:36.

WE like to know how a person used to act, for we think we can infer from that how he will act. That is not always correct, however, for men change. But in our Savior's case, if we study His life, we may very well infer from what He did, what He will do, because He never changes! And this is a comfortable reflection for us at this time, that in the days of His flesh, while He was yet on earth, He loved the company of His people! If He changes not, then He still loves the company of His people. He did reveal Himself, then, to one. He will still speak comfortable words to His people when they are alone. One by one will He reveal Himself to them. He did speak graciously to two. Where Christians converse on holy things, they may still expect that Jesus will Himself draw near. But more frequently He lingered longest and revealed Himself most in the assembly of His people. Where the eleven were met, where many were gathered together, there the Savior came, not once, but twice and often. Learn, then, that we may expect Him here tonight! Peter, and James, and John are representatively here. Here, too, we have some of the goodly women—the Marys and Marthas are here. They are waiting for Him. Their hearts are longing for Him. He is the same now as always. Brothers and Sisters, we may expect Him! He will come to His old haunts. He will come and deal with His people as He did before. Twice, at least, we have it on record that our Savior came to His disciples when they were met on the first day of the week—from which I gather another comfortable thought, that as this is the first day of the week, we may for another reason expect Him to be here, to put honor on what now is the Lord's Day. He, at least twice, for so it is on record, came to His disciples and, standing in their midst, said, "Peace be unto you." On this first day of the week, this Lord's-Day, at eventide I trust—I hope, no, I expect, that you will feel Him here, and I pray that to each one of His people those soft words may come with Divine Power, "Peace be unto you."

Without further preface than these words, let us draw your attention first, to what He said. Secondly, when He appeared to say it. And thirdly, of what came of His appearance at the saying of it.

I. OUR LORD'S GRACIOUS SPEECH. What did He say? He said, "Peace be unto you"—four words, each full of meaning. May I not view those words in four lights? Was it not first a salutation and benediction? Thus He introduced Himself, "Peace be unto you." It was His good wish—more, it was His fervent prayer! He breathed peace upon them expressive of His goodwill, His love, His intense desire for their highest good. Peace is the highest gift He can impart. Said the Apostle, "Grace, mercy, and peace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ." He had given them Grace and mercy—He now gives them the highest benediction, peace! Did He not mean more than that? In a second light it was a benediction. "Peace be unto you." He had been into the invisible world and He had returned from it—and He tells them that there was peace reserved for them. He had passed the veil with His own blood. He had offered up His Sacrifice. He had said, "It is finished." He had received the token that it was finished by His being raised from the dead. And now He comes to them with the marks of His Crucifixion still upon Him, and He tells them there is peace—it is done—"The war is over, the conflict is concluded—My bloody Sacrifice and glorious Resurrection have made peace between you and God." "Peace be unto you." It is the declaration of what He had seen and heard of the Father as the result of His death. A benediction and a declaration.

Was it not also a fiat? By a fiat I mean that kind of word which God spoke to the darkness when He said, "Light be," and light was. Here they were in trouble and Jesus said, "Peace be," and before long peace was. It is always with Jesus to speak the Word of Power, for He is, Himself, the Word of Power. He is God's Word—the Word that built the heavens, the word that establishes the pillars of the universe, and when He speaks thus, it is not a mere wish, it is not a mere prayer, it is not a mere declaration, even, of a fact—it is the fulfillment of wish and prayer, and the application of the fact! "Peace be unto you." Before long they did receive the peace which He thus authoritatively gave them.

But may I not view it in another light, namely, as an absolution? Think a minute, and you will see it is so. These were they who had forsaken Him—there was one who had denied Him! Out of them all, there was no faithful spirit there at all who proved to be faithful in the hour of danger. Like cowards, each one had cared for himself and deserted his Lord. They had slept while He agonized. They had retreated while He advanced. They had, every man, left their Master to seek each man his own. And now what does He say to them? Do they stand as culprits? Is He about to accuse them? Do they stand as deserters? Is He, as a captain, about to condemn them? No, that one word seems to say, "It is forgotten. It is forgiven." My only word to you is, peace, peace, peace. I know your weaknesses. I know your deep regret. I know how you lament that you served Me thus—regret no more, at least be not depressed with such regrets, for lo, My only return to you is this, I give you My, "Salem," My salutation— My word of goodwill, My sweet word of love. I have not revoked My legacy, though I might well have destroyed My last will and testament. I said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you." I confirm that will now, risen from the dead. You shall see I have not cut you off from My affectionate regard. I, risen from the dead, declare what I declared when your love was warm and your resolution was rather to die with me than to desert me. I give you the same as I gave you then, "Peace be unto you."

Now I think there are some sweet things rolled up in those brief thoughts which I have given you. The text itself has richness in it. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, the second thing, and briefly, is—

II. WHEN DID JESUS STAND IN THE MIDST OF HIS DISCIPLES, and say thus, "Peace be unto you"? When? Perhaps in considering the time, we may get some comfort and be led to hope that He will say the same tonight. Well, when did He come? Well, first, He came when they were quite unworthy of His coming. We have already told you how they had served Him. Cowardly—they had deserted Him! But though there was no one there that could have even thought, much less said, "I deserve the Master's company," yet He came. Oh, I think we are, many of us, in the same plight. Looking back upon the past, we cannot feel that we deserve any love visits from the Savior. We dare not put up a plea on that ground. We are very unworthy—we are very unworthy—but that is no reason why He should not come. They were unworthy, but He stood in their midst and said, "Peace."

Now note, next, that they were very unprepared. They were not looking for Him! They had not come together that night with any expectation of seeing Him—I am sure they were not, for when He did come, they were afraid and thought they saw a spirit! They were least of all expecting Him to come. Well, and my Sister, you came in here unprepared. Do not excuse yourself, but yet do not despair about seeing your Lord! Brother, you came here perturbed, troubled. Your soul is not like the lake when it is still, which, like a molten mirror, reflects the stars above. But Jesus Christ can come and mirror Himself in your heart, first smoothing it with the word of peace. Yes, yes, it is wrong to be unprepared for Christ's manifestation, but it is a thousand blessings that our unpreparedness does not keep Him away! I may expect to see Him, though unfit and unworthy. Come Savior, come, I beseech You, pass not by me. I might have feared You would if I had not seen that, in the case of the eleven, their unpreparedness did not bar the door. Oh, let not my unpreparedness keep You away!

Note, further, that our Lord came to them when they greatly needed Him. They had got into a disorganized, demoralized state as a group and they were, every one of them, almost ready to give up their faith. The third day had passed, and they had not yet believed in His Resurrection, though it had been witnessed to them. They were foolish and slow of heart, and I do not know what they might have done the next day, for he that is slow of heart and unbelieving today may go to something worse, if worse may be, tomorrow! And they needed Him—they needed Him and there He was in the midst of them! Courage, then, my Brother! You need Him—you may expect Him! Sister, you need Him—oh, how much! How

Volume 61 3much do I need Him—how would a visit from His love kill many of my sins and quicken all my Graces! The physician comes not only when he is sent for, but when he knows he is needed. The Good Physician does so especially! It is not so much our sense of need as our need, itself, that often brings Him. We frequently do not know our need until He comes, and we see our need in contrast with the supply. Well, then, unworthy and unprepared, yet needing Him, we may expect Him! He will come if we cry out for Him. In our very midst He will stand tonight and reveal Himself!

Moreover, it was a time when they were exercising what spiritual light they had—let that be remembered. They were in a low state, but they had met together. They had loved together. They were showing that like a flock of frightened sheep, they were running together, hardly knowing what else to do. They did at last get near one another. There is something that Christ loves in that. That was good—there was something hopeful there. Well, we, at least, have got together in the

same way. I know you said, "Well, I don't know that I can do much in praising Christ, but I will go where His people are. Perhaps if I cannot praise, I shall still get a blessing, for all that." I know you often do so on the Sabbath. You say on the Saturday, "I am glad it is the last day of the week, that I may go where my Brothers and Sisters are, and while I come, to get a blessing. I especially feel when I come to Prayer Meeting:"—

"There my best friends, my kinsmen, dwell. There God, my Savior, reigns."

Well, the Lord Jesus loves to come where we love to be in His name! That helps to bring Him. So I have another good hope, that as we have come together, come together with no other end but that of stirring up what life we have, and of pouring out before Him what Grace He has given, and of seeking more, that we may expect to see Him!

More than that—on that occasion when He came, there were some of them who were testifying of what they knew. Two of them were telling how they saw Him in the breaking of bread at Emmaus. And while the two spoke, Jesus came! Now here stands one Witness who can bear testimony that there is a living Savior, and a real one, and that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit! And as you hear that testimony, and many of you are recording in your souls your, "Amen," to it, I hope He will stand in our midst and again say in spiritual language, "Peace be unto you."

Once more, though, I say they were in a low state—they were all lamenting their Master's absence. I do not think, of all that company, there was one but what had a heavy heart and was sad because Jesus was not there. If you had turned to Peter and said, "Peter, would you like to see Him?" He would have said, "Oh, for another look on those dear eyes, even though it broke my heart again." And John would have said, "Oh, for another leaning of my head upon that bosom, if I might be permitted such a favor." And everyone, by dear remembrances of the past, would have said, "Alas, we have lost everything in losing Him! Take away the sun out of the skies, rather than take Christ out of the circle of our fellowship." Now, dear Friends, have you, you lovers of the Savior—have you missed Him and are you now saying, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him"? Well, our mingled notes shall reach Him and He will come and stand tonight in the midst of us, and we, again, shall rejoicingly honor and worship while the King sits at His Table with His people. But time flies, and, therefore, I give you but the bare outline of the rest of my sermon.

III. WHAT CAME OF IT? What came of His appearance and of His speaking of peace? If you will

look at the Chapter when you are at home, you will see that, first of all, when Jesus came He banished all their doubts—He said to them, "Why are you troubled? Why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Now, if He comes here tonight, in the midst of this assembly, that is just what He will say to you troubled ones. He will say, "Why are you troubled?" You, perhaps, might answer, "Perhaps there is cause enough for it," but He will reply to it, "All things work together for your good." "When you pass through the river, I will be with you; the floods shall not overflow you." "Cast your care upon Me." "Why are you troubled?" And He would then ask you the very question, "Why do those thoughts arise in your hearts?" You would have to guiltily, perhaps, confess what those thoughts were. You thought He was too hard! You thought He had forgotten you! You thought He was not true, after all—that He did not love you. You thought He would fail you. I will not tell you all your thoughts, but they have been evil thoughts—and if He is here tonight, the blush will mantle on your cheeks while you will say, "I will never have such thoughts, again, but I will from now on say,

'Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.'" There is one cure for evil thoughts like this—the vanished Savior manifested to the eyes of faith!

Then our Lord next proceeded to reveal Himself. Being present—which He might have been, you know, and yet they might not have known Him—He now went to reveal Himself and make them see Him. This is what He did. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have." Then He proves His kinship with earth, His real Manhood, for He took a piece of broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and did eat before them all. Now even so will He do tonight. If He were here tonight, it were no use to you if these scales were upon your eyes—He will take them off! Those harder scales on an earthbound heart, He will take them off. Oh, I have been amazed, my Brothers and Sisters, I bear witness I have sometimes been amazed when the Lord has taken away the stone out of my heart, to feel my own sudden tenderness! I have even sat at that Table, sometimes, and dealt out the bread and wine to you, and longed to be but a dog beneath the table, to eat but a crumb that fell from it—and all of a sudden I have felt His nearness and rejoiced with unspeakable joy! And oftentimes in preaching, when my spirit has felt like a frozen brook, His Grace has thawed my heart! Is not this what the Spouse meant when she said, "Or

Volume 61 5ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib"? Now it is the Presence of Christ that quickens us. Let the prayer be put by each one, "Quicken You me, O Lord, according to Your Word. Yourself, the Word, draw near to me and I shall be quick to perceive You, to embrace You, to rejoice in You this night."

Then the next act of our Savior was to proceed to inform their understanding. You observe He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. Nearness to Christ is an education. Get near to Jesus and you will find that the Corpus Christi is the true college! He who knows the body of Christ has got the body of theology, the body of divinity—the true theology of the Word of God. He that knows Him has understanding. With all your getting, get understanding! And from Him you shall get it, for He is Wisdom. And is He not the Truth of God? And is He not the Incarnate Wisdom? With Him God took counsel before the earth was. There is no studying the Scriptures that becomes so useful as when we study them with Christ to turn over the leaves for us.

Then the next thing was He refreshed their memories. Perhaps I ought to have mentioned this before because it occurs first. He said to them, "These are the words I spoke to you." Tonight, perhaps, if Jesus is here, you will remember those other times when you have seen Him—

"His former visits we recount, When with Him on the holy mount."

Yes, you will say as Jesus is here, "I do remember You and the love of Your espousals. I do remember other sweet seasons when I was with Your people, and my heart glowed at Your love." You will look back, some of you gray-headed Brothers and Sisters in Christ—you will look back, perhaps, 50 years, and remember when Jesus first looked in at your soul. Dear memories! Perish all else but the relics of Christ, the traditions of His Presence in my spirit—these will I hand down from year to year and record them forevermore! Nothing like this to set the memory right, the immediate, actual Presence of Christ, even at this moment.

And then, Beloved, in addition to all this, the Savior's thus appearing showed them their true position, for He told them that they were His witness of these things. When they saw Him, they felt they were something more than mere lookers on, they were to be tellers and testifiers to others. I hope we shall feel this, tonight, that we shall go out from our seats and from the Communion Table, saying, "I have seen the Lord, and I will be a witness in my own family—I will be His witness in the court, or the street, or the city where I dwell. I have seen Him and shall I close my mouth concerning Him? No! His Presence has opened my mouth, that I may show forth His praise. I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of His righteousness, even of His only."

And last of all, that blessed presence created intense joy, though there was a wonderment about the joy that mingled it with unbelief, and we read, "While they yet believed not for joy." They were very, very glad. If you had seen them go into that house, and seen them come out, you would not have known they were the same men! Yet they were no richer, no healthier, no more favored, but they had seen the Lord, and they were glad! It is especially recorded by John, "Then were the disciples glad when they had seen the Lord." Oh, there will be singing here! There will be music in your hearts! You will trip home with merry feet if Jesus Christ does come! Come, then, dear Master! You have bled for us. You have loved us with an everlasting love—'tis but a little thing comparatively that we ask! Your relationship to us binds You to grant it! You will not be a stranger to Your own flesh! You will not hide Yourself from those who are members of Your body, of Your flesh and of Your bones! Your delights were with the sons of men and You have not changed. Oh, if ever You did reveal Yourself, reveal Yourself to us tonight! Melt us down under the Glory of Your Presence! Dissolve us with the superlative majesty of Your love and we will worship and bless You forever and ever!

Now I have said nothing to those of you who know Him not, but I will say these words and have done. His worth—

"His worth if all the nations knew, Surely all the world would love Him too."

God bless you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Psalms 32:1-11; John 17:1-26.

Psalms 32:1-11

"A Psalm of David, Maschil"—that is to say, an instructive Psalm— "Maschil." I suppose that David wrote it after he had been forgiven and restored to Divine favor. I think we may read it as a part of our own experience, either of conversion or when restored after backsliding.

Verses 1, 2. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. Twice he says, "blessed." He had felt the weight of sin. He had been sorely troubled, but now that Nathan is sent to him with the word of pardon, "The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die," he counts himself doubly blessed—blessed, not the man who has never sinned! Blessed is he who, having sinned, is forgiven. Not the man who has no sin, but whose sin is covered. Wonderful word! Both in English and Hebrew, it sounds very much alike. The sacred, "Kophah," the cover which covers sin so that sin is hidden, even from the eyes of God Himself! A wondrous deed! Blessed is the man

who knows that Divine covering! "Blessed," he says "is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." All along, after David's sin, he became very crafty and very cunning, full of guile. You know the dodges that he had resorted to, to cover up his sin—he tried to play some of his tricks on God, Himself, but he felt it was a mischievous and foolish thing to do. He was uneasy, he was unhappy. We have sometimes heard it said that after David sinned, he remained insensible for nine months—until he received the Divine rebuke—but it was not so. He remained very sensitive, very depressed, very unhappy, and he was try

Volume 61 7ing this way and that to cover up his sin and guile. He could not do it. He ought to make a clean breast of it and confess it before God. He ought to give up his crooked ways, his ideas of excusing himself—and when he had done that, when he had given up his guile and his guilt, too—then he got the double blessing. "Blessed, blessed!" If there are any of you who are treading crooked ways with God and man, give them up! I know of nothing that will make you give them up like knowing free, full, perfect pardon through the precious blood of Christ and the Free Grace of God! The two things go together, guilt and guile! The two things go out of us together—when guilt is pardoned, guile is killed. Now hear how David felt while he was conscious of his sin, and yet was not right with God.

3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. A wanton glance and the sin with Bathsheba. Where was the pleasure of it when it cost him all this? Such groaning that his very bones grew old, as if they were rotten, and his heart was heavy as if he wished to die. "For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me." God was dealing with him! God with His hand pressing him heavily, forcing his sin home upon him, making him say, "My sin is always before me." Oh, the misery of sinning to a child of God! Do not dream that we can ever have any pleasure in sin! The worldling may, but the Believer never can. To him it is a deadly viper that will fill his veins with burning poison.

4. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. When he tried to pray, it was a dried-up prayer. He tried to make a Psalm, but it was a dried-up song. He tried to do some good, for he was still a good man, but it was all withered without the Spirit of God. His moisture was gone out of him, turned into the drought of summer, and summer, in David's country, was a very droughty thing, indeed. Every human thing despaired, the grass seemed to turn to dust—it was so with him. If you go into sin, this is what will happen to you. If you are a true child of God, you will have all the joy of God taken from you, all the moisture of your heart dried up—and you will be like a parched, withered thing. "Selah"—time to stop, time to have a pause in the music—he was on so bass a key, he now had need to tighten the harp strings and rise to something a little sweeter.

5. I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD: and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. He must come to confession—full, spontaneous, unreserved—there must be a resolution. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord"—a firm determination to hide nothing, to see the sin, yourself, and to tell the Lord that you see it, and to confess it with great grief and sorrow. What a wonderful word that is, "I said, I will confess, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." God took away the sin! Yes, the very pith and marrow of it, "the iniquity of my sin." Take the bone away and the marrow of the bone, too! "You forgave the iniquity of my sin"—it has all gone, wholly gone—by one stroke of

God's Divine Grace the sinner was pardoned! Selah again 6. For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. "For this" (because of this and for this blessing) "shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found." The pardoning God must be sought. There is an attraction in the greatness of His mercy. They that are godly, even though they have offended and gone astray, must come back and seek for pardon in a time when You may be found. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him." The godly man is safe when the floods are out. There are times when great waters prevailed in David's country—the brooks sometimes turned to rivers and came down with a rush when they were least expected. And here he says that when such a thing as that shall happen, yet God's people shall be saved. They shall come, but they shall not come near unto them. Let me read those words again. If you have gone to God in the day of your sin, and have found pardon, He that took away the sin will take away the sorrow. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him."

7. You are my hiding place: You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. "You are my hiding place"—precious words! "You are my hiding place"—not, "You are a hiding place," but, "You are MY hiding place." A man who is beset by foes does not stand still and say, "Yes, I can see there is a hiding place there," but he runs to it! Beloved, run to your hiding place this morning, each one of you who can have a claim and interest in Christ! Run to Him and say, "You shall preserve me from trouble." David has come up out of the roaring to the Singing. All day long he roared, and now all day long he sings! He hears songs everywhere! He lives in a circle of music, his heart is so glad! Well may he put another, "Selah," for he has struck the strings very joyfully and they need tuning again.

8. I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eye. And here the speaker changes—"I will instruct you." I have forgiven you. "I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go." I have restored you back to the way. Now I will teach you in the way you shall go. "I will guide you with My eye." Your own might lead you astray. "I will guide you with My eye." I will be on the path, I will fix My eye upon you. "I will guide you with My eye."

9. Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you. "Be you not as the horse," not only David, but all of you! If God will guide you, be guided! If He will teach you, be teachable! If He will be gracious to you, be gracious towards Him!

10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." David had found that out—his sin had brought him a transient pleasure, but a lasting misery! He shall have a bodyguard of mercy. God

Volume 61 9will be gracious to him, tender to him and will not leave him if he is trusting in the Lord.

11. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous." Be glad. Well, but you cannot always be glad, says one. "Be glad in the Lord"—you may always be glad in Him! Here is an unchanging source of joy! "Rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy." Here is the man that was silent, but now has gone as far as shouting! Is it not enough to make him rejoice? Twice he was blessed, in the first and second verses, and now he has been pardoned, he has been delivered, he has been

compassed about with mercy—why, he must be glad! "Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart." God bless you in the reading of his Word.

John 17:1-26.

Verses 1, 2. These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You. As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. Here we have the two Doctrines of a General and a Particular Redemption. Through His death, Christ has power given Him over all flesh, but the distinct, special objective is the salvation of His own—"that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

3. And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. To know God in the sense of being acquainted with Him—loving Him—abiding in fellowship with Him— this is life eternal! To know God in Christ Jesus is to be saved, indeed!

4. I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do. Which no other man could ever have said—not even Adam in his perfection, for his work was not finished—and, alas, how marred it was before it came near to finishing! And the most gracious man that ever died could not, in his last moments, say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do," for it was still imperfect. There were many things which he would wish to have done, and many errors which he would wish to have rectified. But our Lord is more than man, and rises to this point—"I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

5. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was. "I have disrobed Myself to be Your Servant. Clothe Me again with the garments of My majesty. Let me come back to the palace when I shall have passed through the stream of death." So far is the prayer for Himself. Now He prays for His people.

6, 7. I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word. Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. "They have not accepted Me as a human teacher on My own account, unsent and uncommissioned, but they perfectly understand that there is a union between the Father and the Son. The things that You have given Me are of You." 8. For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. There are great depths in these words. One of the greatest of German divines always refused to preach from this chapter, for he said he felt that few of God's people had a sufficient measure of faith to understand it. And when he came to die, he had this read to him three times before he fell asleep. There is a world of wonderful mystery! Though the words are short and plain, yet the sense is fathomless.

9. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours. There is an intercession of Christ which is for all the world, but His choicest intercession—His effectual prayer—is for His own. Nothing, perhaps, makes men so angry as this statement! They cannot endure that God should dispense His gifts according to His own will—but so it stands true!. There is an intercession in which none have a part but His own. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me, for they are Yours."

10, 11. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. They, therefore, will be left. The Shepherd will be gone. They will seem to be like orphans with their best Friend departed.

11-13. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. He asks not only that they may be kept and so unharmed, but that they may be comforted, and so made glad. O sad hearts, hear your Redeemer's prayer for you—and do not doubt that it is answered—"that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

14. I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. If nobody hates you for being a Christian, are you a Christian? If you find that you run with the general herd, and swim with the current, can you be a follower of that Christ who was despised and rejected of men?

15. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One. Not that they should shut themselves up in monasteries and convents. That is not the prayer of Christ. "I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One."

16-19. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth. As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes, I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the Truth. Sanctify Myself—consecrate Myself—set Myself apart—for their

Volume 61 11 salvation that they also might be sanctified, consecrated, set apart through the Truth of God. Now comes a third part of the prayer, in which He pleads for the whole Church—for that part of it at that time not saved—for the unborn ones—for us.

20-21. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. Our Savior knew how apt we would be to split up into sects, and to be divided into parties, and so He prays again and again that we may be one! Cultivate the spirit of Christian affection. If there are divisions, let them not come through you. Contend earnestly for the faith, but also let us love one another.

22, 23. And the glory which You gave Me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me. Surely the passage seems to culminate here. These words rise like the peak of a mighty Alp almost out of our sight into the clear brightness of Heaven—"have loved them as You have loved Me." Now, Believer, you cannot fully comprehend this, but believe it—that as surely as the Father loves the Son, as and after the same manner He also loves you—without beginning, without measure, without change, without end! "You have loved them as You have loved Me."

24-26. Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them. Let us read that wonderful passage again—"that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them."

26. And I in them. Sacred, mystical union! May our souls enjoy it day by day!

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 24,36-44 #1958 - The First Appearance of the

THE FIRST APPEARANCE

OF THE RISEN LORD TO THE ELEVEN

NO. 1958

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1887,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And as they thus spoke, Jesus, Himself, stood in the midst of them and said unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said

unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in

your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you

see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe

for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you any food here? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke

unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must

be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses,

and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me."

Luke 24:36-44.

THIS, beloved Friends, is one of the most memorable of our Lord's many visits to His disciples after He had risen from the dead. Each one of these appearances had its own peculiarity. I cannot, at this time, give you even an outline of the special colorings which distinguished each of the many manifestations of our risen Lord. The instance now before us may be considered to be the fullest and most deliberate of all the manifestations, abounding beyond every other in "infallible proofs." Remember that it occurred on the same day in which our Lord had risen from the dead and it was the close of a long day of gracious appearings. It was the summing up of a series of interviews, all of which were proofs of the Lord's Resurrection. There was the empty tomb and the grave clothes left there— the place where the Lord lay was accessible to all who chose to inspect it—for the great stone which had been sealed and guarded was rolled away. This, in itself, was most

impressive evidence. Moreover, the holy women had been there and had seen a vision of angels who said that Jesus was alive. Magdalene had enjoyed a special interview. Peter and John had been into the empty tomb and had seen for themselves. The report was current that "the Lord was risen, indeed, and had appeared unto Simon." It was a special thing that He should appear unto Simon for the disciples painfully knew how Simon had denied his Master and His appearance unto Simon seemed to have struck them as peculiarly characteristic—it was so like the manner of our Lord.

Volume 33 1They met together in their bewilderment—the 11 of them gathered, as I suppose, for a social meal, for Mark tells as that the Lord appeared unto them "as they sat at meat." It must have been very late in the day, but they were loath to part and so kept together till midnight. While they were sitting at meat, two Brothers came in who, even after the sun had set, had hastened back from Emmaus. These newcomers related how One who seemed a stranger had joined Himself to them as they were walking from Jerusalem, had talked with them in such a way that their hearts had been made to burn and had made Himself known unto them in the breaking of bread at the journey's end. They declared that it was the Lord who had thus appeared to them and, though they had intended to spend the night at Emmaus, they had hurried back to tell the marvelous news to the eleven! Hence the witnesses accumulated with great rapidity—it became more and more clear that Jesus had really risen from the dead! But as yet the doubters were not convinced, for Mark says, "After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them."

Everything was working up to one point—the most unbelieving of them were being driven into a corner! They must doubt the truthfulness of Magdalene and the other saintly women. They must question the veracity of Simon. They must reject the two newly-arrived Brothers and charge them with telling idle tales—or else they must believe that Jesus was still alive, though they had seen Him die upon the Cross! At that moment the chief confirmation of all presented itself—"for Jesus, Himself, stood in the midst of them." The doors were shut, but, despite every obstacle, their Lord was present in the center of the assembly! In the Presence of One whose loving smile warmed their hearts, their unbelief was destined to thaw and disappear! Jesus revealed Himself in all the warmth of His vitality and love—and made them understand that it was none other than Himself and that the Scriptures had told them it should be so. They were slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets had spoken concerning Him, but He brought them to it by His familiar communion with them. Oh, that in a like way He would put an end to all our doubts and fears!

Brothers and Sisters, though you and I were not at that interview, yet we may derive much profit from it while we look at it in detail, anxiously desiring that we may in spirit see, look upon and handle the Word of Life manifested in the flesh! Oh, to learn all that Jesus would teach us as we now, in spirit, take our places at that midnight meeting of the chosen ones!

In this wonderful manifestation of our Lord to His Apostles, I notice three things worthy of our careful observation this morning. This incident teaches us the certainty of the Resurrection of our Lord. Secondly, it shows us a little of the Character of our risen Master. And, thirdly, it gives us certain hints as to the nature of our own resurrection, when it shall be granted us. Oh, that we may be counted worthy to attain to the resurrection from among the dead!

I. First, then, let us see here THE CERTAINTY OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION. We have often asserted and we affirm it yet again, that no fact in history is better attested than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! The common mass of facts accepted by all men as historical are not one-tenth as certainly assured to us as this fact is! It must not be denied by any who are willing to pay the slightest respect to the testimony of their fellow men, that Jesus, who died upon the Cross and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, did literally rise again from the dead!

Observe, that when this Person appeared in the room, the first token that it was Jesus was His speech—they were to have the evidence of hearing—He used the same speech. No sooner did He appear than He spoke. He was never dumb and it was natural that the great Teacher and Friend should at once salute His followers, from whom He had been so painfully parted. His first words must have called to their minds those cheering notes with which He had closed His last address. They must have recognized that charming voice. I suppose its tone and rhythm to have been rich with a music most sweet and heavenly. A perfect voice would naturally be given to a perfect Man. The very sound of it would, through their ears, have charmed conviction into their minds with a glow of joy had they not been frozen up in unbelief. "Never man spoke like this Man."

They might have known Him by His speech, alone. There were tones of voice as well as forms of language which were peculiar to Jesus of Nazareth. What our Lord said was just like He—it was all of a piece with His former discourse. Among the last sounds which lingered in their ears was that word, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you"—and now it must surely be the same Person who introduces Himself with the cheering salutation, "Peace be unto you." About the Lord there were the air and style of one who had peace, Himself, and loved to communicate it to others. The tone in which He spoke peace tended to create it! He was a peacemaker and a peace giver—and by this sign they were driven to discern their Leader.

Do you not think that they were almost persuaded to believe that it was Jesus when He proceeded to chide them in a manner more tender than any other chiding could have been? How gentle the words when He said, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Our Lord's chidings were comforts in disguise! His upbraiding was consolation in an unusual shape. Did not His upbraiding on this occasion bring to their minds His question upon the sea of Galilee when He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Did they not also remember when He came to them walking on the water and they were afraid that He was a spirit and cried out for fear—and He said to them, "It is I. Be not afraid"? Surely they remembered enough of these things to have made sure that it was their Lord had not their spirits been sunken in sorrow! Our Lord had never been unwisely silent as to their faults. He had never passed over their errors with that false and indulgent affection which gratifies its own ease by tolerating sin. No, He had pointed out their faults with the fidelity of true love. And now that He thus admonished them, they ought to have perceived that it was none other than He. Alas, unbelief is slow to die! When Jesus came at last to talk to them about Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, He was upon a favorite topic. Then the 11 might have nudged each other and whispered, "It is the Lord!" Jesus had, in His latter hours, been continually pointing out the Scriptures which were being fulfilled in Himself and, at this interview, He repeated His former teaching. This is assuredly none other than He who always spoke His Father's mind and will—and constantly did honor to the Holy Spirit by whom the sacred

Books were inspired! Thus in His tones and topics our Lord gave clear indications that it was He who had suddenly appeared in that little assembly.

I want you to notice that this evidence was all the better because they, themselves, evidently remained the same men as they had been. "They were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." And thus they did exactly what they had done long before when He came to them walking on the waters! In the interval between His death and His appearing, no change had come over them! Nothing had happened to them to elevate them, as yet, out of their littleness of mind. The Holy Spirit was not yet given and, therefore, all that they had heard at the Last Supper and seen in Gethsemane and at the Cross had not yet exercised its full influence upon them. They were still childish and unbelieving! The same men, then, are looking at the same Person and they are in their ordinary condition—this argues strongly for the correctness of their identification of their well-beloved Lord. They are not carried away by enthusiasm, nor wafted aloft by fanaticism—they are not even, as yet, borne up by the Holy Spirit into an unusual state of mind—they are as slow of heart and as fearful as ever they were. If they are convinced that Jesus has risen from the dead, depend upon it, it must be so! If they go forth to tell the tidings of His Resurrection and to yield up their lives for it, you may be sure that their witness is true, for they are not the sort of men to be deceived!

In our day there has been a buzz about certain miracles of faith, but the statements usually come from persons whose impartiality is questionable—credulous persons who saw what they evidently wished to see. I know several good people who would not willfully deceive who, nevertheless, upon some points are exceedingly unreliable because their enthusiasm is prepared to be imposed upon. Any hawker of wonders would expect them to be buyers—they have a taste for the marvelous! As witnesses, the evidence of such people has no value in it as compared with that of these 11 men who evidently were the reverse of credulous or excitable. In the Apostles' case, the facts were tested to the utmost and the truth was not admitted till it was forced upon them! I am not excusing the unbelief of the disciples, but I claim that their witness has all the more weight in it because it was the result of such cool investigation. These Apostles were, in a special manner, to be witnesses of the Resurrection and it makes assurance doubly sure to us when we see them arrive at their conclusion with such deliberate steps. These were men like ourselves, only perhaps a little less likely to be deceived—they needed to be convinced by overwhelming witness and they were so! And afterwards they always declared boldly that their crucified Lord had, indeed, risen from the dead!

Thus far in the narrative they had received the evidence of their ears and that is by no means weak evidence. But now they are to have the evidence of sight, for the Savior said to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself." "And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." John says, "His side," also, which he especially noted because he had seen the piercing of that side and the blood and water flow out. They were to see and identify that blessed body which had suffered death! The nail prints were visible, both in His hands which were open before them, and also in His feet which their condescending Lord deigned to expose to their deliberate gaze. There was the mark of the gash in His side—and this the Lord Jesus graciously bared to them, as afterwards He did more fully to Thomas, when He said, "Reach here your hand and thrust it into My side." These were the marks of the Lord Jesus by which His identity could be verified.

Beyond this, there was the general contour of His Countenance and the fashion of the whole Man by which they could discern Him. His body, though it was now, in a sense, glorified, was so far veiled as to its new condition that it retained its former likeness. They must have perceived that the Lord was no longer subject to the pains and infirmities of our ordinary mortality—otherwise His wounds had not been healed so soon— but there remained sure marks by which they knew that it was Jesus and no other. He looked like a lamb that had been slain—the signs of the Son of Man were in His hands and feet and side. Their sight of the Lord was not a hasty glimpse, but a steady inspection, for John, in his first Epistle writes, "Which we have seen and looked upon." This implies a lengthened looking and such the Lord Jesus invited His friends to take. They could not have been mistaken when they were afforded such a view of those marks by which His identity was established. The same Christ that died, had risen from the dead! The same Jesus that had hung upon the Cross, now stood in the midst of those who knew Him best! It was the same body and they identified it—although a great change had doubtless come over it since it was taken down from the tree.

Furthermore, that they might be quite sure, the Lord invited them to receive the evidence of touch or feeling. He called them to a form of examination from which, I doubt not, many of them shrank. He said, "Handle Me. Handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." Writers have remarked upon the use of the word, "bones," instead of, "blood," in this case. But I do not think that any inference can be safely drawn from there. It would have been barely possible for the disciples to have discovered, by handling, that the Lord had blood, but they could, by handling, perceive that He had bones and, therefore, the expression is natural enough, without our imputing to it a meaning which it may never have been intended to convey! The Savior had a reason, no doubt, other than some have imagined, for the use of the terms, "a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have." The Savior had not assumed a phantom body—there were bones in it as well as flesh—it was, to the fullest, as substantial as ever. He had not put on an appearance, as angels do when they visit the sons of men. No, His body was solid substance which could be handled. "Handle Me and see that it is I." He bade them see that it was flesh and bone, such as no spirit has. There were the substantial elements of a human frame in that body of Christ which stood in the midst of the eleven. Jesus cried, "Handle Me and see."

Thus our Lord was establishing to the Apostles, not only His identity, but also His substantial corporeal existence—He would make them see that He was a Man of flesh and bones—not a ghost, airy and unsubstantial. This should correct a certain form of teaching upon the Resurrection which is all too common. I was present some years ago at the funeral of a man of God for whom I had much respect. In the chapel a certain excellent Doctor of Divinity gave us an address, before the interment, in which he informed us as to the condition of his departed friend. He said that he was not in the coffin—indeed, there was nothing of him there. This I was sorry to hear, for if so, I was ignorantly mourning over a body which had no relation to my friend. The preacher went on to describe the way in which the man of God had ascended to Heaven at the moment of death— his spirit fashioning for itself a body as it passed through the air!

I believed in my friend's being in Heaven, but not in his being there in a body. I knew that my friend's body was in the coffin and I believed that it would be laid in the tomb—and I expected that it would rise again from the grave at the coming of the Lord. I did not believe that my friend would weave for himself a filmy frame, making a second body, nor do I believe it now, though I heard it

so affirmed. I believe in the resurrection of the dead! I look to see the very body which was buried, raised again! It is true that as the seed develops into the flower, so the buried body is merely the germ out of which will come the spiritual body—but, still, it will not be a second body, but the same body, as to identity. I shall enter into no dispute about the atoms of the body, nor deny that the particles of our flesh, in the process of their decay, may be taken up by plants and absorbed into the bodies of animals and all that! I do not care one jot about identity of atoms! There may not be a solitary ounce of the same matter, but yet identity can be preserved—and it must be preserved if I read my Bible right!

My body today is the same as that which I inhabited 20 years ago and yet all its particles are different! Even so, the body put into the grave and the body that rises from it are not two bodies, but one body. The saints are not, at the coming of their Lord, to reMal. disembodied spirits, nor to wear freshly created bodies, but their entire manhood is to be restored and to enjoy endless bliss! Well said the Patriarch of old, "in my flesh shall I see God." "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us, also, by Jesus." I cannot see how the doctrine of Christ goes beyond the doctrine of Plato and others if it is not a doctrine which respects this body! The immortality of the soul was accepted and known as a Truth of God before the faith of Christ was preached, for it is dimly discoverable by the light of nature. But the resurrection of the body is a Revelation peculiar to the Christian dispensation—at which the wise men of the world very naturally mocked—but which it ill becomes Christian men to spirit away! The body which is buried shall rise again! It is true it is sown a natural body and shall be raised a spiritual body, but it will be truly a body and the same it which was sown shall be raised! It is true it is sown in weakness and raised in power, but the same it is thus raised. It is true that it is sown in weakness to be raised in power and sown a corruptible body, to be raised in incorruption, but in each case it is the same body, though so gloriously changed.

It will be of a material substance, also, for our Savior's body was material, since He said, "Handle Me and see that it is I, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." Still further to confirm the faith of the disciples and to show them that their Lord had a real body—and not the mere form of one—He gave them evidence which appealed to their common sense. He said "Have you any food here? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence." This was an exceedingly convincing proof of His unquestionable Resurrection! In very deed and fact, and not in vision and phantom, the Man who had died upon the Cross stood among them!

Let us just think of this and rejoice! This Resurrection of our Lord Jesus is a matter of certainty, for, if you spirit this away, you have done away with the Gospel altogether! If He is not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain! You are yet in your sins! Justification receives its seal in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—not in His appearing as a phantom, but in His being loosed from death and raised to a glorious life! This is God's mark of the acceptance of the work of the great Substitute and of the justification of all for whom His atoning work was performed.

Note well that this is also our grand hope concerning those who are asleep. You have buried them forever if Christ was not raised from the dead! They have passed out of your sight and they shall never again have fellowship with you unless Jesus rose again from the dead! The Apostle makes

the resurrection of all who are in Christ to hinge upon the Resurrection of Christ. I do not feel it necessary, when I talk with the bereaved, to comfort them at all concerning those that are asleep in Christ, as to their souls—we know that they are forever with the Lord and are supremely blessed and, therefore, we need no further comfort. The only matter upon which we need consolation is that poor body which once we loved so well, but which now we must leave in the cold clay. The resurrection comes in as a final undoing of all that death has done. "They shall come again from the land of the enemy." Jesus says, "Your dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise." If we question the Resurrection of Christ, then is the whole of our faith questioned and those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished! And we are left just where others were before Christ brought this Divine Truth of God to light. Only as we are sure of the Resurrection of Jesus can we cry, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"

II. Secondly, will you follow me while I very briefly set forth OUR LORD'S CHARACTER WHEN RISEN FROM THE DEAD?

What is He, now that He has conquered death and all that belongs to it? What is He, now that He shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore? He is much the same as He used to be! Indeed, He is altogether what He was, for He is "the same yesterday, today and forever."

Notice, first, that in this appearance of Christ we are taught that He is still anxious to create peace in the hearts of His people. No sooner did He make Himself visible than He said, "Peace be unto you." Beloved, your risen Lord wants you to be happy! When He was here on earth, He said, "Let not your hearts be troubled." He says the same to you today. He takes no delight in the distresses of His people. He would have His joy to be in them, that their joy may be full. He bids you rejoice in Him always. He whispers to you, this morning, as you sit in the pew, "Peace be unto you." He has not lost His tender care over the least of the flock—He would have each one led by the still waters and made to lie down in green pastures.

Note, again, that He has not lost His habit of chiding unbelief and encouraging faith, for as soon as He has risen and speaks with His disciples, He asks them, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" He loves you to believe in Him and be at rest. Find if you can, Beloved, one occasion in which Jesus inculcated doubt, or bade men dwell in uncertainty! The apostles of unbelief are everywhere, today, and they imagine that they are doing God a service by spreading what they call, "honest doubt." This is death to all joy! Poison to all peace! The Savior did not do so! He would have them take extraordinary measures to get rid of their doubt. "Handle Me," He says. It was going a long way to say that, but He would sooner be handled than His people should doubt! Ordinarily it might not be proper for them to touch Him. Had He not said to the women, "Touch Me not"? But what may not be allowable, ordinarily, becomes proper when necessity demands it. The removal of their doubt as to our Lord's Resurrection necessitated that they should handle Him and, therefore, He bids them do so.

O Beloved, you that are troubled and vexed with thoughts and, therefore, get no comfort out of your religion because of your mistrust—your Lord would have you come very near to Him—and put His Gospel to any test which will satisfy you. He cannot bear you to doubt! He appeals tenderly, saying, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?" He would at this moment still encourage you to taste and see that the Lord is good. He would have you believe in the substantial reality of His religion and handle Him and see! Trust Him largely and simply, as a child trusts its mother and

knows no fear!

Notice, next, that when the Savior had risen from the dead and a measure of His Glory was upon Him, He was still most condescendingly familiar with His people. He showed them His hands and His feet and He said, "Handle Me and see." When He was on earth, before His passion, He was most free with His disciples—no pretense of dignity kept Him apart from them. He was their Master and Lord—and yet He washed their feet! He was the Son of the Highest, but He was among them as One who serves! He said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." He is the same today—

"His sacred name a common word On earth He loves to hear; There is no majesty in Him Which love may not come near."

Though He reigns in the highest heavens, His delights are still with the sons of men! He will still permit us to sit at His feet, or even to lean our head upon His bosom. Jesus will listen as we pour out our griefs. He will regard our cry when we are not pleading about a sword in our bones, but only concerning a thorn in our flesh. Jesus is still the Brother born for adversity. He still manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Is not this clear and also very pleasant to see, as we study this interview?

The next thing is that the risen Lord was still wonderfully patient, even as He had always been. He bore with their folly and infirmity, for, "while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered," He did not chide them. He discerned between one unbelief and another and He judged that the unbelief which grew out of wonder was not so blamable as that former unbelief which denied credible evidence. Instead of rebuke, He gives confirmation. He says, "Have you any food here?" And He takes a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb and eats it. Not that He needed food. His body could receive food, but it did not require it. Eating was His own sweet way of showing them that if He could, He would solve all their questions. He would do anything in His great patience that they might be cured of their mistrust! Just so today, Beloved, Jesus does not chide you, but He invites you to believe Him. He invites you, therefore, to sup with Him and eat bread at His table. "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever," but in His great mercy He will use another tone and encourage you to trust Him. Can you hold back? Oh, please, do not do so!

Observe that our Savior, though He was risen from the dead and, therefore, in a measure, in His Glory, entered into the fullest fellowship with His own. Peter tells us that they did eat and drink with Him. I do not notice, in this narrative, that He drank with them, but He certainly ate of such food as they had, and this was a clear token of His fellowship with them. In all ages eating and drinking with one another has been the most expressive token of communion and so the Savior seems to say to us, today, "I have eaten with you, My people, since I have quit the grave. I have eaten with you through the 11 who represented you. I have eaten and I will still eat with you, till we sit down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. If any man opens unto Me, I will come into Him and will sup with Him and he with Me." Yes, the Lord Jesus is still wonderfully near to us and He waits to grant us the highest forms of fellowship which can be known this side the gate of pearl! In this let our spirits quietly rejoice.

Let me call your attention to the fact that when Jesus had risen from the dead, He was just as tender of Scripture as He was before His decease. I have dwelt for two Sunday mornings [Sermons #1955—Jesus Declining the Legions and #1956—On the Cross After Death] upon the

wonderful way in which our Lord always magnified the Scriptures. And here, as if to crown all, He told them that, "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. And He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead." Find Jesus where you may, He is the antagonist of those who would lessen the authority of Holy Scripture! "It is written" is His weapon against Satan, His argument against wicked men! The learned at this hour scoff at the Book and accuse of Bibliolatry those of us who reverence the Divine Word! But in this they derive no assistance from the teaching or example of Jesus. Not a word derogatory of Scripture ever fell from the lips of Jesus Christ—He always manifested the most reverent regard for every jot and tittle of the Inspired Volume. Since our Savior, not only before His death, but after it, took care, thus, to commend the Scriptures to us, let us avoid with all our hearts all teaching in which Holy Scripture is put into the background! Still the Bible and the Bible, alone, should be and shall be the religion of Protestants—and we will not budge an inch from that standpoint, God helping us!

Once again, our Savior, after He had risen from the dead, showed that He was anxious for the salvation of men, for it was at this interview that He breathed upon the Apostles and bade them receive the Holy Spirit, to fit them to go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature! The missionary spirit is the spirit of Christ—not only the spirit of Him that died to save, but the spirit of Him who has finished His work and has gone to His rest. Let us cultivate that spirit, if we would be like the Jesus who has risen from the dead!

III. I can stay no longer, because I would draw your attention, in the third place, to the light which is thrown by this incident upon THE NATURE OF OUR OWN RESURRECTION.

First, I gather from this text that our nature, our whole humanity, will be perfected at the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we that may then be alive shall be changed. Jesus has redeemed not only our souls, but our bodies! "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" When the Lord shall deliver His captive people out of the land of the enemy, He will not leave a bone of one of them in the adversary's power. The dominion of death shall be utterly broken. Our entire nature shall be redeemed unto the living God in the day of our resurrection! After death, until that day, we shall be disembodied spirits, but in the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, we shall attain our full inheritance! We are looking forward to a complete restoration. At this time the body is dead because of sin and, therefore, it suffers pain and tends to decay, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. In our resurrection, however, the body shall also be quickened and the resurrection shall be to the body what regeneration has been to the soul! Thus shall our humanity be completely delivered from the consequences of the Fall. Perfect manhood is that which Jesus restores from sin and the grave—and this shall be ours in the day of His appearing.

I gather next that in our resurrection our nature will be full of peace. Jesus Christ would not have said, "Peace be unto you," if there had not been a deep peace within Himself. He was calm and undisturbed. There was much peace about His whole life, but after His Resurrection, His peace becomes very conspicuous. There is no striving with scribes and Pharisees; there is no battling with anybody after our Lord is risen! A French author has written of our Lord's Forty Days on earth after the Resurrection under the title of, "The Life of Jesus Christ in Glory." Though rather

misleading at first, the title is not so inaccurate as it appears, for His work was done and His warfare was accomplished—and our Lord's life here was the beginning of His Glory. Such shall be our life—we shall be flooded with eternal peace and shall never again be tossed about with trouble, sorrow, distress or persecution! An infinite serenity shall keep our body, soul and spirit throughout eternity.

When we rise again our nature will find its home amid the communion of saints. When the Lord Jesus Christ had risen again, His first resort was the room where His disciples were gathered. His first evening was spent among the objects of His love. Even so, wherever we are, we shall seek and find communion with the saints. I joyfully expect to meet many of you in Heaven—to know you and commune with you. I would not like to float about in the future state without a personality in the midst of a company of undefined and unknown beings. That would be no Heaven to me! No, Brothers and Sisters, we shall soon perceive who our comrades are and we shall rejoice in them and in our Lord. There could be no communion among unknown entities. You cannot have fellowship with people whom you do not recognize and, therefore, it seems to me most clear that we shall, in the future state, have fellowship through recognition—and our heavenly resurrection bodies shall help the recognition and share in the fellowship. As the risen Christ wends His way to the upper room of the eleven, so will you, by force of holy gravitation, find your way to the place where all the servants of God shall gather at the last. Then shall we be truly at home and go no more out forever.

Furthermore, I see that in that day our bodies will admirably serve our spirits. For look at our Lord's body. Now that He is risen from the dead, He desires to convince His disciples and His body becomes at once the means of His argument, the evidence of His statement! His flesh and bones were text and sermon for Him. "Handle Me," He says, "and see." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, whatever we may have to do in eternity, we shall not be hindered by our bodies as we now are! Flesh and blood hamper us, but "flesh and bones" shall help us! I need to speak, sometimes, but my head aches, or my throat is choked, or my legs refuse to bear me up—but it is not so in the resurrection from the dead! A thousand infirmities in this earthly life compass us about, but our risen body shall be helpful to our regenerated nature! It is only a natural body now, fit for our soul, but hereafter it shall be a spiritual body, adapted to all the desires and wishes of the Heaven-born spirit—and no longer shall we have to cry out, "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." We shall find in the risen body a power such as the spirit shall wish to employ for the noblest purposes. Will not this be wonderful?

In that day, Beloved, when we shall rise again from the dead, we shall remember the past. Do you not notice how the risen Savior says, "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you." He had not forgotten His former state. I think Dr. Watts is right when he says that we shall, "with transporting joys recount the labors of our feet." It is rather a small subject and probably we shall far more delight to dwell on the labors of our Redeemer's hands and feet—but still, we shall remember all the ways whereby the Lord our God led us—and we shall talk to one another concerning them. In Heaven we shall remember our happy Sabbaths here below, when our hearts burned within us while Jesus, Himself, drew near. Since Jesus speaks after He has risen of the things that He said while He was with His disciples, we perceive that the river of death is not like the fabled Lethe, which caused all who drank thereof to forget their past. We shall arise with a multitude of hallowed memories enriching our minds! Death will not be oblivion to us, for it

was not so to Jesus. Rather shall we meditate on mercies experienced and, by discoursing on them, we shall make known to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God!

Observe that our Lord, after He had risen from the dead, was still full of the spirit of service and, therefore, He called others out to go and preach the Gospel—and He gave them the Spirit of God to help them. When you and I are risen from the dead, we shall rise full of the spirit of service! What engagements we may have throughout eternity we are not told because we have enough to do to fulfill our engagements now, but assuredly we shall be honored with errands of mercy and tasks of love fitted for our heavenly being. and I doubt not it shall be one of our greatest delights, while seeing the Lord's face, to serve Him with all our perfected powers! He will use us in the grand economy of future manifestations of His Divine Glory. Possibly we may be to other dispensations what the angels have been to this. Be that as it may, we shall find a part of our bliss and joy in constantly serving Him who has raised us from the dead!

There I leave the subject, wishing that I could have handled it much better. Think it over when you are quiet at home and add this thought to it, that you have a share in all that is contained in resurrection. May the Holy Spirit give you a personal grip of this vital Truth of God! You, yourself, shall rise from the dead—therefore, be not afraid to die!

If any of my Hearers have no share in our Lord's Resurrection, I am truly sorry for them. O my Friend, what you are losing! If you have no share in the living Lord, may God have mercy upon you! If you have no share in Christ's rising from the dead, then you will not be raised up in the likeness of His glorified body! If you do not attain to that resurrection from among the dead, then you must abide in death, with no prospect but that of a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. Oh, look to Jesus, the Savior! Only as you look to Him can there be a happy future for you. God help you to do so at once, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 16:1-14;

Luke 24:33-48; 1 John 1:1-10.

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Luke 24,38 #2408 - Christ the Cure for Troubled He

CHRIST THE CURE

FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

NO. 2408

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 14, 1895.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 10, 1887.

"And He said unto them, Why are you troubled and why

do doubts arise in your hearts."

Luke 24:38.

IT seems, from these questions of our Lord, that true Believers may

come into a troubled state of mind. The eleven were truly Christ's disciples and even His Apostles, yet, when their faith failed them and they refused to believe the testimony that Christ was risen from the dead, they were troubled in their minds and tossed to and fro, as on a stormy sea. Unbelief is a great troubler. Our peace comes to us by faith and if our faith grows weak, our peace of mind is apt to decline and we are likely to become much disturbed in spirit. If those who are Believers, who have passed from death unto life, are sometimes troubled, you may be sure that others are! It is no wonder that they are troubled who have never experienced the Grace of God in conversion and have never felt the joy which Jesus brings to those whom He saves. If every unconverted man could see his true state, he would not dare to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, until he had been brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ. If you who are living without a Savior realized your lost condition, your pillows would be stuffed with thorns instead of with feathers. I scarcely think that your bread would be sweet to your taste, or that light would be pleasant to your eyes, if you really knew your present condition and the jeopardy in which your souls are found. I tremble for you and I shall be glad if you learn to tremble for yourselves—and to flee from the wrath to come!

I want, at this time, to speak more particularly to some who are, in a measure, awakened and awakened to their real position before God, and have been so for a long while. They are not happy. They never will be happy until a very great change comes over them, yet I do not see why they should not, at once, have done with doubts, fears and troubled thoughts, and enter immediately into rest and peace. I say that I do not see why they should not receive this great blessing, but I see a great many reasons why they should! I can truly say that when I preach to

you, I labor with all my heart and soul to bring you to the Cross of Christ. And I have sometimes thought, when I am going home, "That was a poor sermon if it is judged merely by the rules of rhetoric, yet it was such a sermon that if I could have heard it, myself, when I was in de

Volume 41 1spair—when I was longing for salvation—it would have been worth a Jew's eye to me, for it would have been the very thing I needed to show me the road to Heaven. It would have been a key to unlock my dungeon door and to set me at liberty."

And I am praying that it may be so now—every word I speak is steeped in prayer that some of my truly anxious hearers, who would be right if they could, may now end their wanderings at the Cross—have done with their uneasiness and restlessness—and find peace in Jesus Christ the Savior! So, with that objective in view, I am going to take the question out of its context and, though Jesus put it to His eleven Apostles, I shall venture to address it to you who are very far from being Apostles—who are not yet even disciples, but who, at least, wish that you were numbered, even, among the least of God's people! To you I say, in the words of the text, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

I. And, first, THIS QUESTION IS WORTH CONSIDERING—"Why are you troubled?"

Many of you are troubled. Some of you are very greatly troubled, though not always to the same extent. You shake off your anxiety, sometimes. Unhappy men that you are, that you should be able to shake off a trouble which is driving you to the Savior! You get out into company. You become immersed in business and you forget this great sorrow, this sad perplexity. But, after a while, it comes back to you. A little sickness, or a death in the family, or even the east wind and the fogs, with the dullness that often accompanies them, will bring back to you those sorrowful thoughts and you are again troubled!

And you have many questions in your heart—you cannot get rid of them. It has been so with you for mouths! I know some with whom it has been so for years—they have been attending my ministry, perhaps, or the ministry of some other preacher of the Word, and, after a sermon which has been pressing and personal, they feel dreadfully uneasy. They cannot tell what to make of themselves and, sometimes, they have said, "This state of things must come to an end. We cannot any longer endure to have this indefinable something, this mysterious fear which haunts us, and takes away the very joy of life."

It will be a good thing to ask this question, "Why are we so troubled?" because it would be a great pity to be troubled for nothing. If there is no cause for the anxiety, let us get rid of it! Count it one of the wisest actions to battle with despondency. I do not suppose there is any man in this place who is naturally more inclined to despondency than I am, but when I feel this pressure upon my spirit, I seek to overcome it by hoping in God. I say to myself, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." When I press the question home and find that there is nothing, really, to disquiet me, I am not disquieted any longer! And I suppose that you are of much the same make as I am and, if you look your trouble fairly in the face, and you find that there is nothing in it, then you will shake yourself loose from it and come to a cheery state of heart once more! But suppose that there should be something that ought to cause you anxiety—is it not best, at once, to make a full investigation of the matter? It may be that the cure of the evil lies in the search for it. Here is a

man who is half afraid that he has contracted a disease, but, if so, at present it is only in its early stages. Now, if he is a foolish man, he will say, "I shall not trouble about it. If it gets to be much worse, then I will see to it." But if he is a wise, intelligent man, he says, "I must know the ins and outs of this affair. I will go to the best physician I can find and he shall thoroughly examine me, and I will know what these symptoms mean, for, even if there is disease, perhaps it may be nipped in the bud and my life may yet be saved. If I go to the doctor at once, he may be able to battle with this mischief before it takes a greater hold upon me." I think that he is a very sensible man to say to himself, "Suppose that my health is all wrong? Possibly there is a cure for my malady—I will go and see if I can have this cure."

Remember that the first thing you ought to see to is your soul. Sirs, by all means, attend to your health! Look well to the title deeds of your property, make your wills, and so forth, but, first of all, see to the wellbeing of your immortal nature, for what will you do if you should pass into another world and find yourselves forever shut out from hope? What an awful thing that would be! Therefore, first and foremost, look to that which is to last forever and make your calling and election sure! God help you, by His Grace, to see to this matter this very hour! If there is a cure to be had anywhere, there will be no particular reason for fearing and being troubled if we resolve to go and obtain it. If it is, indeed, put within our reach, let us stretch out our hand and take it at once—and so end our troubles and questions in the best manner possible—by getting the cure for our disease, the heal-all for our soul-sickness! The disciples, at the time mentioned in our text, were troubled, because, when Jesus stood in their midst, they supposed that it was a spirit, a ghost—yet it was no ghost, it was the real living Lord Jesus, whom they afterwards handled, who was there, but, "they supposed that they had seen a spirit," and therefore, "they were terrified and frightened."

I wonder whether your present troubles arise out of a supposition. I have known some who have said to me, "I am afraid, Sir, and this is my daily trouble, that God has never chosen me to eternal salvation. Suppose that, after all, I should not be one of His elect?" Now, listen— suppose that you should be one of His elect? Is there not as much sense in supposing the one thing as the other? And suppose that you were to leave off supposing—that would be a very sensible thing to do! There is not much good that ever comes by indulging suppositions of that kind! Neither you nor I can climb to Heaven and unfold that roll. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God." Leave that secret thing with Him. I will tell you something in which there is no supposition. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Under no supposable circumstance will Jesus Christ ever cast away a sinner who comes to Him! Therefore, kindly leave the supposing alone and just take the certainty that whoever comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast out. I hear another one say, "But suppose I have committed the unpardonable sin?" To which I answer, "But suppose you have not?" And there is just as much reason for supposing one way as supposing the other. And again I say, suppose you are wise enough to leave off supposing altogether? If you have committed the unpardonable sin, I should really like to know what it is, for, after reading, I think, as much of sound divinity as anybody, I have never yet been able to discover what it is! Nor have I ever met with any divine who has even seemed to me to approximate to any sure and certain description of what the unpardonable sin may be. This much I do know about it—it is called a sin that is unto death. And as soon as a man commits it, a spiritual death steals over him, so that he never desires mercy, never is conscious of his guilt and never wishes to find salvation by Jesus

Christ. He becomes dead! So dead that it is not merely the sin which is, itself, unpardonable, but the condition of heart into which it throws the man, so that he never seeks pardon, or even wishes for it. Now, my dear Friends, you know that you have not come to that terrible state because you are always restless about your soul's salvation and always wishing that by some means you might be saved!

Whatever supposition you bring, I believe that I can sweep your supposition away, or that it deserves to be swept away. Therefore, do not be in doubt or fear because of a supposition. I could bother you with suppositions if I liked to do so. Suppose there were to be an earthquake. Suppose that top gallery were to come tumbling down. Why, I could go on supposing till I had frightened every nervous soul in the place! But what a fool I would be and what fools you would be to be frightened thereby! I pray you, believe me, that there is enough in the black facts of your case to trouble you without your vexing yourself unnecessarily by suppositions! It used to be thought to be a mark of sanctity for a man to wear a hair shirt and an iron belt round his waist which covered him with sores. We know better than that, now! Therefore, why make a hair shirt of suppositions and an iron belt of pure inventions of your own imagination? Get rid of them all, I beseech you!

But suppose that you have done with suppositions, yet it may be possible that you are troubled with doubts. "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?" You are unable to get peace because you have certain doubts in your hearts. Well, what are your doubts?

"I have been thinking," says one, "perhaps the Bible is not true." Now, when these disciples thought that Jesus, Himself, was not really there, but that it was only a vision, our Savior said to them, "Handle Me, and see." And the best way to prove whether the Bible is true is not to stand and listen to the evil suggestions of skeptics against it, but to hear its own challenge, "Handle Me, and see." There is something wonderfully substantial in the religion of Jesus Christ!

To me, it is life, joy, comfort, strength—everything! I handle it and I have tried and proved it for myself, these many years, but I do not expect my experience to stand in the place of your own experience of it. Go to Christ with prayer, yourself. Go to God with repentance, yourself, and see whether He does not pardon you, bless you, change you and make a new creature of you! And when He has done that, believe me, you will never again doubt whether the Bible is true, for when it shall have saved you from your fears, rescued you from your sins and brought you into life and light and liberty, you will be absolutely certain that it is true because you have tried and tested it yourself!

"Oh, but I have a different thought from that!" says another friend, "I think that I cannot be saved because I do not feel all that I ought to feel. I have not had sufficient horror of sin. I have not felt myself to be the worst sinner who ever lived. In fact, I do not think I can ever drag myself down to that state of despair which I have read of as the experience of a great many who have been saved." Now that is another of your foolish thoughts which you had better give up thinking! Who told you that you must weep a certain quantity of tears? Who told you that you must feel a certain degree of anguish? That Book has not told you so, nor has God's preacher! But we are continually telling you that the suffering on account of sin was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Atonement for human guilt is in His precious blood and that you may come to Him just as you are! Have we not often tried to draw a line of distinction between repentance, which is the fruit of the Spirit, and despair, which is a temptation of the devil? Many, no doubt, come to Christ in black

despair, but why should you not come with great hopefulness expecting that He will bless you? And if you do so come, depend upon it that He will not send you away empty. Get rid of that foolish thought, I pray you, and believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord. May the Holy Spirit help you to do so!

Perhaps a third troubled one says, "My thought is, Sir, that, if I professed to be a Christian, I should not live up to it." I heard a good reply to that remark from one who came to see me last week. One said to her, "You know, if you make a profession of religion, you must live up to it." "Oh," she answered, "all the profession I make is that I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ—and I put my trust in Him to help me to live up to it—I dare trust Him as far as that." Mind that you do the same and get rid, altogether, of the thought that it is you, by yourself, who has to live up to your profession. Salvation is of the Lord, alone! You have to accept Grace from Christ for nothing and He will delight to give it to you. And He will also delight to continue to give you all the Grace you need till He brings you safely home to Glory!

Our Lord asked His disciples, "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" There are some who say, "It is the feelings that we have in our heart that causes us anxiety." Well now, what are your feelings? As a rule, I care much more about faith than about feelings, but for once, tell me what your feelings are, you who are troubled and vexed with anxious thoughts.

"Well, Sir," says one, "I am afraid that I shall not be saved." But why not? "Oh, I do not know why, but I am afraid I will not!" Well, do you not think that you are very foolish? If you will think of it a little, you will be sure that you are. Because, when a person says, "I am so fearful," and you ask, "What are you afraid of?" and he says, " Oh, I do not know, but I am so fearful!" you would say to him, "My dear fellow, if you do not know what it is that you fear, then give up being fearful!" If you have nothing to be afraid of, do not be afraid, for what can be the reason of it? "Oh, but, Sir," says another, "I feel—well, to make short work of it, I feel that it is too good to be true." What is too good to be true? "Why, that I may have my sins forgiven simply upon my believing and may now, at once, become a child of God!" Too good to be true, is it? Well, it would be too good to be true if it came from you—but as it comes from God, nothing is too good to be true of the good and gracious God! He is willing to blot out all your sins if you will but trust to the Lord Jesus Christ. However much you may have transgressed against His Laws, He is prepared to pass an act of amnesty and oblivion and to blot out all your transgressions! Your wanderings, your blasphemies, even, He is ready to forgive— more ready to forgive than you are to be forgiven—and He puts it simply thus, "Believe in My Son. Trust that He whom I have appointed to save you will save you and, upon your so trusting, your transgressions are forgiven and you are saved."

It is a great message that we have to deliver. Would you have a little Gospel from a great God? Would you have a little Gospel from that great Savior who was the Son of God and yet died upon the Cross? If it had been less than it is, you would have begun to quibble about its littleness! But now that it is so great, I pray you, do not quarrel with great mercy, but receive it, believe it, believe it at once and let your doubts and fears end from this time forth, through the effectual working of God's gracious Spirit!

I have lingered too long over this first division, yet I hope I have convinced you that the question is worth considering.

II. The question we have now to consider is this—HAS YOUR TROUBLE ANYTHING TO DO WITH JESUS? This is what our Lord meant by enquiring of His disciples, "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" Their trouble had to do with Jesus, but they had made a great mistake concerning Him.

"Well," you say, "this subject of Jesus and His salvation, it is all a supernatural business." Do all supernatural matters frighten you? "Yes, Sir, they do. I am afraid of that which goes beyond the verge of things that can be seen." You will be there, yourself, before long—whether you are afraid of it or not, you will die. As surely as you are in this Tabernacle, you will have to do with that which is supernatural! You may live a considerable time, perhaps, if you are a young man, but it will seem a very short while when you come to the end of it. And then death, Heaven, Hell, angels, God, the Judgement Seat and eternity will have to be dealt with by you! Oh, it would be a great mercy if you could now get to be familiar with these things! Think where you wish to live forever—you had better learn the language of the country! It would be well for you to begin to understand something of the world to come, for come it will, and there is no putting it off. The strongest man in this place will have to die and it is a reflection which often forces itself upon me that poor, weak, sickly people keep on living when you thought that they would have been dead years ago—but your fine, strong, healthy men—these are they of whom we hear, "Such an one died at the railway station." Or, "Such an one was taken all of a sudden, and is gone." Therefore, see to this matter, Sir! See to it at once! You will have to deal with the supernatural sooner or later, so had you not better begin now?

"Oh," you say, "but this Lord Jesus Christ, in whom you tell me to trust, seems so unreal. I cannot see Him and handle Him, as those Apostles did. He is so unreal to me." Yes, so the Apostles thought, you know. They thought that they saw a ghost—yet there is nothing more real in all the world than our Lord Jesus Christ! I wish that you would seek Him tonight. I wish that you would get to that little room of yours and kneel at your bedside, and cry, "Savior, if You are, indeed, a Savior, here is a sinner who longs to be saved! Come and save me." If you do so, you shall soon find that though not gripped with the hands, or seen with the eyes, yet there is no brighter, truer, or more living reality than Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

"But, Sir," you cry, "this believing seems so vague and indistinct. If you told me something that I had to do, I would try to do it. If I had to go barefoot from here to John O'Groat's House, for instance, I would know what that meant and I would start tomorrow morning, or, if necessary tonight." Yes, I daresay you would, but, after all, there is nothing more vague in your being told to believe in Jesus than there would be in bidding you to walk barefoot to John O'Groat's House. To believe in Jesus is a most simple matter, easily understood, even by a child—it is just to trust Him, that is all. To believe that what is written concerning Him is true and then to trust yourself entirely to Him—that will save you. Look, I have thrown my whole weight upon this platform rail. If that should go down, I shall go down. Do just that with the Lord Jesus—throw your whole weight on Him. If He cannot save you, be lost. I must be lost, I am sure, if He cannot save me. My whole and only hope hangs on those dear hands that were nailed to the Cross. My only trust is in that precious blood which flowed from His pierced side. I risk my eternal destiny with Him and feel that there is no risk whatever in doing so! Now, tell me, is that vague? It seems to me to be very distinct and clear.

"Well," says one, "but, somehow, Christ seems so unapproachable. I cannot get at Him." Now, that is the last thing that you ought to say, for He will receive you if you breathe only a silent prayer to Him. In the pew down there, sitting on your seat, or standing in the aisle, or away up in the gallery, just speak to Him in your heart and He will hear you in a moment. Unapproachable? Why, beloved Friends, there is nobody so approachable as Christ! A wish will reach Him, a tear has already found Him—He is everywhere present wherever there is any heart that longs to obtain salvation through Him!

Then I fancy that I hear one of you say, "I feel that He is so holy that I, so guilty, cannot come to Him." Would you have Him to be unholy, then? If He were so, how could He save you? But, being holy, yet He bids you come to Him. Then why do you not come? Why do you make a barrier out of such a glorious fact as this, that Christ is good, just and true? Remember that this, also, is true, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. If He does not save sinners, then He came into this world to mock us! He came into this world for nothing and if you, being a sinner, will come to Christ and Christ rejects you, He has forgotten His commission, He has belied His Character! He must give up His name, for He is no longer Jesus if He does not save sinners that come to Him, yes, and if He does not save sinners that do not come to Him, too, for He has come to seek and to save—both to seek and to save—that which was lost.

"But," says yet another, "I cannot think that the Lord Jesus Christ would take any notice of me." Oh, that I could nail your wretched, miserable thoughts of my great Lord up on His Cross! "Oh, but I am nobody, Sir!" Christ died for nobodies! "But I am poor." "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." "But I am quite illiterate." Yes, and it is to such that a plain Gospel is sent by our gracious Savior. "But I am altogether obscure and unknown." Oh, no, you are not! The Lord Jesus knows all about you! Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not suppose that if you were rich, Christ would think any more of you than He does now! You know how it is among men—if a man wears a good coat and a diamond ring, people give him a seat as soon as he comes into the aisle!

Yes, but that is not the spirit of Jesus Christ! He does not care about your diamond rings and your satin dresses. My Lord Himself wore a smock frock, woven from the top, throughout, a garment without seam. He was dressed as the most plain and humble of peasants dressed, and He delighted to associate with the poorest of the poor. Therefore, do not tell me that He will not condescend to look at you! My Lord would leave off listening to the songs of angels to hear a poor sinner cry! If it were some grand review day in Heaven, when cherubim and mailed seraphim marched before His august eye, He would leave the camp of angels to come and listen to a beggar's prayer, for, remember, He is a Man as truly as He is God, and everything that is human touches that true heart of His that was pierced for men. Therefore, cry to Him, ask Him to have mercy upon you and He will stand still, as He did when blind Bartimaeus cried to Him! And He will command you to be brought before Him—and then He will say to you, "What will you that I should do for you?" And He will give you spiritual sight and spiritual health in answer to your prayer. Come to Him, however poor, weak and insignificant you may be, and you shall soon prove that it is even as I say.

If you have made any mistakes about my Lord and Master, I hope that what I have said may help to remove them.

III. Now, lastly, and may God bless this word to you, dear troubled Friend, to bring you to the Savior! JESUS RIGHTLY KNOWN WILL MEET EVERY TROUBLE OF EVERY SEEKING SOUL.

If you did but know Him, you would find an end to your trouble at once! Those lines are quite true—

"His worth, if all the nations knew, Surely the whole world would love Him too."

If men did but know what a Savior He is, they would never rest till they had proved Him to be their Savior!

Let me tell you a few things that may help to end all your troubles. First, Jesus Christ is alive. He died, but He rose again. He is alive and living among men. Spiritually, He is still on earth. His bodily Presence is in Heaven, but His spiritual Presence is everywhere—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found." He is alive, active, living, present with us here, giving us His benedictions, working out His Divine projects—a living present force among the myriads of this city—a living present Person in this House of Prayer.

Next, Jesus Christ lives as One who has made a full Atonement for sin. Do you know what that means? This is what I understand by Atonement. We were guilty. We had sinned and the Law of God has bound punishment to sin with iron clamps. I am sure that the only way in which the world is to be governed is by this Law of God, that the consequences of evil must be evil. If men will do wrong, they must be punished. With all reverence, we may say that God Himself cannot reverse that Law, for it is a right and proper Law. Well, then, Jesus Christ came and bore the consequences of human sin in His own body on the tree and those who believe in Jesus Christ, by the very act of believing, accept Him to be their Substitute, bearing their guilt and punishment, and being unto God a Sacrifice instead of them. Therefore, as many as have believed in Jesus Christ may know for sure that He died in their place.

I remember talking, one day, to a poor man, an Irishman, and trying to make this point very plain to him. I said, "Now suppose you had committed a murder and you were to be hanged for it." "Yes," he replied, "and I should deserve it." "But suppose I should go to the Queen and say to her, 'I am willing to be hanged, instead of this man. Such is my love for him that, to set him free and yet to honor the law, I will consent to die in his place"? The man said, "That would be very kind of you, Sir." "Well, suppose that the Queen had the ability to consent to it and I could be accepted as your substitute—and I were hanged instead of you—would the policeman take you up for that murder?" "Oh, no!" he exclaimed, "I would say, 'You can't touch me. Why, the gentleman was hanged instead of me! Therefore, I am free."

That is exactly the way of salvation. Jesus Christ suffered in the place of all of you who trust in Him and you are clear before the bar of Divine Justice. Every man who believes in Jesus Christ, that is, trusts Him, may know without doubt that Christ was, for him, a certain and effectual Substitute by which his sin was put away on the Cross. "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Now, if you understand that great Truth of God, I think that your doubts and fears ought to come to an end at once.

Remember, also, that Jesus Christ lives to give repentance and remission of sins. In this very chapter we read that He bade His Apostles go and preach repentance and remission of sins in His

name among all nations! He says to you, "Turn from your sin and I will turn from My anger. Quit your sin and your sin is forgiven. Leave it. Loathe it and I will grant you immediate pardon for the sake of the great atoning Sacrifice." This Truth, also, if it is fully believed, should bring peace and joy to your heart and mind!

Please remember, also, that the Lord Jesus Christ lives to pray for sinners. He lives to make intercession for the transgressors! He lives to give to sinners the Holy Spirit to work in them true belief and true repentance! He lives mighty to save, to do for you what you cannot do for yourself, to bear you up and bear you through, and bring you, at last, to His own right hand!

Brothers and Sisters, as I trust my Lord Jesus Christ, myself, with all my heart, with all my future, my past, my present, with, indeed, everything, and as I feel perfect peace in doing so, I would to God that you would do the same, that you might feel the same peace, and get strength within to bear the troubles of this mortal life. Did you ever hear what good John Hyatt, who used to preach to the sailors, said when he was dying? Someone asked him, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust Jesus with your soul, now?" "Trust Jesus with my soul!" he exclaimed, "if I had ten thousand souls, I could trust them all with Him!" We are not ten thousand here, tonight—we are somewhat under that number—but oh, that we might all come and trust our souls with Jesus! Then, in that Last Great Day, with sweet clamor of praise, with united tempests of song, we will bless that dear crucified but now exalted Savior who will not fail one of us, but will bring us to see His face in Glory!

Will you not trust Him tonight? Dear Friend, you might go down those stairs, you know, with a firm foot, saying, "I am a saved man." Yes, out of this area many a troubled heart may make its way and go home with all the bells ringing out sweet hallelujahs—"I have believed! I am forgiven! I am the chief of sinners, but I am forgiven, for I have trusted where God bids me trust. And now, because I am forgiven and am a child of God, I will live a new life, and I will serve the Lord with all my heart."

You good soldiers who are here, tonight, I hope you are already good soldiers of Jesus Christ. But if you are not, I would like to be the recruiting sergeant and enlist you beneath the standard of the Cross. Only trust my Lord and you shall be saved in the day of battle, and saved in the hour of death—yes, and saved amidst the temptations of this wicked city. He shall cover you! He, Himself, shall cover you and you shall be perfectly safe beneath that Divine Shelter! Who will trust Christ and be saved? Lord, give us many souls, tonight, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:32-44.

Mark 16:1-2. And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and

Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. Their love made them prompt. Their affection was about to attempt a needless and, indeed, impossible thing. Yet I do not doubt that it was acceptable before God. Oh, that we had such love that even the dead body of the Christ should be so dear to us that we would be ready, at great expense, to anoint it! I fear that, nowadays, even His living Word is not valued as it should be. How few, therefore, should we be likely to find who would have cared for His dead

body? These holy women had had cause enough to love their Lord and they showed that their hearts were full of affection for Him even after He had been taken from them. 3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? A question that has puzzled many other people concerning many other things perplexed these holy women, yet there was no reason for the question to be raised at all. Perhaps some of you are, at this time, distressed when there is no cause for distress, and in fear where no fear is. It was so with these women who said, one to another, "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?"

4. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And, therefore, hard to roll away and, therefore, the more easily seen when it was rolled away! And, therefore, the greater cause for joy that it was rolled away! In the greatness of our troubles there may often be space for the greater display of the goodness of God! A great trial may be nothing more than the prelude of a great joy. Do not dread the foaming billows, for they may wash you ashore—it is the worst that they can do—and it is also the best. The stone at the door of the sepulcher was very great, but it was rolled away, so that it mattered not to the women how great it was.

5. And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were frightened. An angel had been allowed to assume the appearance of a man—that usually seems to be the way in which angels appear to men. I suppose there is, after all, a great kinship between angels and men, otherwise angelic beings would not so constantly assume that form when they appear to men. At the sight of the young man clothed in a long white garment, these good women were frightened.

6, 7. And he said to them, Be not frightened: You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you. Make sure, Beloved, that you know the Truth of God for yourselves and then hasten to tell it to others. I pray you, run not without knowing what your errand is to be, but I also pray you, when you have an errand for the Lord, do not tarry, but, "Go your way, tell His disciples." It was very thoughtful of this angel to say, "and Peter," thus linking with the disciples the name of him who had most glaringly transgressed and denied his Master,

8. And they went out quickly and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid. But, after this, they summoned up courage and did tell the story of their Lord's resurrection.

9-13. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the rest: neither believed they them. Unbelief is very hard to kill, even in hearts that are right with God. So we need not wonder that Divine Grace is required to expel unbelief from the hearts of the unregenerate!

14. Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was

risen. The story of our Lord's appearance to the disciples is more fully told by Luke in the 24th Chapter of his Gospel, to which let us turn.

Luke 24:32-35. And they said, one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with as by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. These were the two disciples who had recognized their Lord in the breaking of bread, though they did not know Him during their walk with Him to Emmaus.

36. And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you. This was the common Jewish salutation, but, from then on it would be sanctified most Divinely and it would be a Christian greeting to say, "Peace be unto you."

37-44. But they were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see; far a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Notice the seals which our Lord continually set upon the Old Testament, the manner in which He always treated the Scripture, the reverent way in which He confessed its Infallibility—and His determination that in every item, every jot and tittle—it should be fulfilled by Himself. This was often manifested before His death and, on His return from the grave, He had not changed His mind! He here speaks of the three great parts into which the Old Testament was divided by the Jews and He expressly sets the seal of His royal assent upon "the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms." May we, in like manner, prize the whole Inspired Word!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY

TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 24,40 #254- The Wounds of Jesus

THE WOUNDS OF JESUS

NO. 254

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 30, 1859,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"He showed them His hands and His feet."

Luke 24:40.

I HAVE selected this sentence as the text, although I shall not strictly adhere to it. What was to be seen on Christ's hands and feet? We are taught that the prints of the nails were visible and that in His side there was still the gash of the spear. For did He not say to Thomas? "Reach here your finger and behold My hands and reach here your hand and thrust it into My side and be not faithless, but believing"? I wish to draw your attention to the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ, when He rose again from the dead, had in His body the marks of His passion. If He had pleased He could readily have removed them. He rose again from the dead and He might have erased from His body everything which could be an indication of what He had suffered and endured before He descended into the tomb. But, no, instead, there were the pierced hands and feet and there was the open side. What was the reason for this? There was no absolute necessity for it—it could easily have been dispensed with. What, then, were the reasons? I shall endeavor to enter into this subject and I hope we may draw some profitable instructions from there.

First, what influence did the exhibition of the hands and feet have upon the disciples? Secondly, why is it that Jesus Christ, now in Heaven, bears with Him the scars in His flesh? And, then, thirdly, is there any lesson for us in the fact that Jesus Christ still wears His wounds? I think there is.

I. First, then, OF WHAT USE WAS THE EXHIBITION OF THOSE WOUNDS TO THE DISCIPLES? I reply at once that they were infallible proofs that He was the same Person. He said, "Behold My hands and feet, that it is, I, Myself." It was to establish His identity, that He was the very same Jesus whom they had followed, whom at last they had deserted, whom they had beheld afar off crucified and slain and whom they had carried to the tomb in the gloom of the evening. It was the very same Christ who was now before them and they might know it—for there was the seal of His sufferings upon Him. He was the same Person. The hands and feet could testify to that. You know, Beloved, had not some such evidence been visible upon our Savior, it is probable that His disciples would have been unbelieving enough to doubt the identity of His Person. Have you ever seen men changed, extremely changed in their external appearance? I have known a man, perhaps, five or six years ago. He has passed through a world of suffering and pain and when I

have seen him again, I have declared, "I should not have known you if I had met you in the street."

Now, when the disciples parted with Jesus it was at the Lord's Supper. They then walked with Him into the garden. There did the Savior sweat, "as it were great drops of blood." Do you not imagine that such a wrestling, such a bloody sweat as that, must have had some effect upon His visage? It had surely had enough to mar it before. But now the plowshares of grief were sharpened and anguish made deep furrows upon Him. There must have been lines of grief upon His brow, deeper than they had ever seen before. This would have produced a change great enough to make them forget His countenance. Nor was this all. You know he had to undergo the flagellation at the pillar of the Praetorian and then to die. Can you imagine that a man could pass through the process of death, through such astonishing agony as that which the Savior endured and yet that there should be no change in his visible appearance? I can conceive that in passing through such a furnace as this, the very lineaments of Christ's face would seem to have been melted and would have need to be restruck before the disciples could discern that He was the same. Besides that, when Jesus rose, He rose, you know, as He now sits in Heaven. His body was flesh and bone, but, nevertheless, it had miraculous powers. It was capable of entering into a room without the ordinary modes of access. We find our Savior standing in the midst of His disciples, the doors being shut.

I believe that Jesus had a body such as we are to have in the next world. Jesus Christ was not a phantom or spectra. His body was not a spirit. It was a real body. And so in Heaven imagine not that we are to be spirits. We are to be spirits until the great resurrection day. But, then, our spirit is afterwards to receive a spiritual body. It is to be clothed upon. It is not forever to be a naked, bodiless spirit. That body will be to all intents and purposes the same body which shall be laid in the tomb. It is sown in dishonor and the same it is raised in Glory—it is sown in weakness and the same it is raised in power. Mark, Jesus was still flesh! All flesh is not the same flesh—all bodies have not the same qualities. So our Savior's flesh was flesh that could not suffer—flesh that had extraordinary powers about it—flesh however, that could eat, although it was under no necessity to do so. And such may be the body, the glorified body, which shall be given to us when we shall rise at the first resurrection and shall be made like unto our Head. But, now, think! If Christ had to undergo in His countenance those matchless transformations, that must have been, first of all, connected with His bloody sweat, then, with His agony and after that, with the transforming, or, if I may use such a word, the transmutation of His body into a spiritual body, can you not conceive that His likeness would be changed—that the disciples would scarcely know Him if there had not been some deeply graven marks whereby they would be able to recognize Him? The disciples looked upon the very face, but, even then they doubted. There was a majesty about Him which most of them had not seen. Peter, James and John, had seen Him transfigured, when His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them. But the rest of the disciples had only seen Him as a Man of Sorrows. They had not seen Him as the glorious Lord and, therefore, they would be apt to doubt whether He was the same. But these nail-prints, this pierced side—these were marks which they could not dispute—which unbelief itself could not doubt. And they all were convinced and confessed that He was the Lord. And even faithless Thomas, was constrained to cry, " My Lord and my God!"

II. Let us turn to the second question—Why SHOULD CHRIST WEAR THESE WOUNDS IN HEAVEN AND OF WHAT AVAIL ARE THEY? Let me give you some thoughts upon the matter.

I can conceive, first, that the wounds of Christ in Heaven will be a theme of eternal wonder to the angels. An old writer represents the angels as saying, "Oh, Lord of Glory, what are these wounds in Your hands?" They had seen Him depart from Heaven and they had gone with Him as far as they might go, singing, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth.' " Some of them had watched Him through His pilgrimage, for "He was seen of angels." But when He returned, I doubt not that they crowded round Him, bowed before Him in adoration and then put the holy question, "What are these wounds in Your hands?" At any rate they were enabled to behold for themselves in Heaven the man who suffered and they could see the wounds which were produced in His body by His sufferings. And I can readily imagine that this would cause them to lift their songs higher, would prolong their shouts of triumph and would cause them to adore Him with a rapture of wonderment such as they had never felt before. And I doubt not that every time they look upon His hands and behold the crucified Man exalted by His Father's side, they are afresh wrapped in wonder and again they strike their harps with more joyous fingers at the thought of what be must have suffered who thus bears the sears of His hard-fought battles.

Again—Christ wears these scars in His body in Heaven as His ornaments. The wounds of Christ are His glories, they are His jewels and His precious things. To the eye of the Believer Christ is never so glorious, never so passing fair, as when we can say of Him, "My Beloved is white and ruddy," white with innocence and ruddy with His own blood. He never seems so beautiful as when we can see Him as the rose and the lily. As the lily, matchless purity and as the rose, crimsoned with His own gore. We may talk of Christ in His beauty, in many places raising the dead and stilling the tempest, but oh, there never was such a matchless Christ as He that did hang upon the Cross. There I behold all His beauties, all His attributes developed, all His love drawn out, all His character expressed in letters so legible that even my poor stammering heart can read those lines and speak them out again—as I see them written in crimson upon the bloody tree.

Beloved, these are to Jesus what they are to us. They are His ornaments, His royal jewels, His fair array. He does not care for the splendor and pomp of kings. The thorny crown is His diadem—a diadem such as no monarch ever wore. It is true that He bears not now the scepter of reed, but there is a glory in it that there never flashed from scepter of gold. It is true He is not now buffeted and spit upon—His face is not now marred more than that of any other man by grief and sorrow, for He is glorified and full of blessedness. But He never seems so lovely as when we see Him buffeted of men for our sakes, enduring all manner of grief, bearing our iniquities and carrying our sorrows. Jesus Christ finds such beauties in His wounds that He will not renounce them. He will wear the court dress in which He wooed our souls and He will wear the royal purple of His atonement throughout eternity.

Nor are these the only ornaments of Christ—they are His trophies—the trophies of His love. Have you never seen a soldier with a gash across his forehead or in his cheek? Why every soldier will tell you the wound in battle is no disfigurement—it is his honor. "If" said he, "I received a wound when I was retreating, a wound in the back, that were to my disgrace. If I have received a wound in a victory, then it is an honorable thing to be wounded." Now Jesus Christ has scars of honor in His flesh and glory in His eyes. He has other trophies—He has divided the spoil with the strong—He has taken the captive away from his tyrant master. He has redeemed for Himself a host that no man can number, who are all the trophies of His victories—but these scars—these are the memorials of the fight and these the trophies, too.

Do you not know it was from the side of Jesus that Death sucked its death? Jesus did hang upon the Cross and Death thought to get the victory. Yes, but in its victory it destroyed itself. There are three things in Christ that Death never met with before, all of which are fatal to it. There was in Christ innocence. Now, as long as man was innocent, he could not die. Adam lived as long as he was innocent. Now Christ was about to die. But Death sucked in innocent blood. He sucked in his own poison and he died. Again, blessedness is that which takes away the sting of death. Now Christ, even when He was dying, was "God over all, blessed forever." All that Death had ever killed before was under the curse. But this man was never by nature under the curse—because for our sakes He was not born into this world a cursed man. He was the seed of woman, it is true, but still not of carnal generation. He did come under the curse when He took upon Himself our sins, but not for His own sins. He was in Himself blessed. Death sucked in blessed blood—he had never done that before— all others have been under the curse—and that slew Death. It was innocence combined with blessedness that was the destruction of Death.

Yet another thing. Death had never met before with any man who had life in himself. But when Death drunk Christ's blood it drunk life. For His blood is the life of the soul and is the seed of life eternal. Where ever it goes, does it not give life to the dead? And Death, finding that it had drunk into its own veins life in the form of Jesus' blood gave up the ghost. And Death itself is dead, for Christ has destroyed it, by the sacrifice of Himself. He has put it away. He has said, "Oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory?" But now, since it was from these very wounds that Death sucked in its own death and that Hell was destroyed— since these were the only weapons of a weaponless Redeemer, He wears and bears them as His trophies in Heaven. David laid up Goliath's sword before the Lord forever. Jesus lays up His wounds before the Lord, for His wounds were His weapons and this is why He wears them still.

I was thinking while coming here of Jesus Christ in Heaven with His wounds and another thought struck me. Another reason why Jesus wears His wounds is that when He intercedes He may employ them as powerful advocates. When He rises up to pray for His people, He needs not speak a word. He lifts His hands before His Father's face. He makes bare His side and points to His feet. These are the orators with which He pleads with God—these wounds. Oh, He must prevail! Do you not see that Christ without His wounds in Heaven might be potent enough, but there would not be that glorious simplicity of intercession which now you see. He has nothing to do but to show His hands. Him the Father hears always. His blood cries and is heard, His wounds plead and prevail.

Let us think again. Jesus Christ appears in Heaven as the Wounded One, this shows again that He has not laid aside His priesthood. You know how Watts paraphrases the idea. He says—

"Looks like a lamb that has been slain,

And wears His priesthood still." If the wounds had been removed we might have forgotten that there was a sacrifice. And, perhaps, next we might have forgotten that there was a priest. But the wounds are there—then there is a sacrifice and there is a priest, also, for He who is wounded is both Himself, the sacrifice and the priest. The priesthood of Melchisedec is a glorious subject. He who reads that with the eye of faith and is blessed with the Spirit, will find much cause for joy when he contrasts the priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron.

The priesthood of Aaron began and it finished. But the priesthood of Melchisedec had no beginning and it had no end. He was, we are told, "Without beginning of days and without end of years"—without father, without mother, without descent. Such is the priesthood of Christ! It shall never end. He Himself is without beginning and His priesthood is without end. When the last ransomed soul is brought in, when there shall be no more prayers to offer, Christ shall still be a priest. Though he has no sacrifice now to slay, for He is the sacrifice Himself, "once and for all," yet still He is a Priest and when all His people as the result of that sacrifice shall be assembled around His glorious Throne, He shall still be the Priest. "For You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." I take it that this is a further reason why He still bears His wounds in Heaven.

There is another and a terrible reason why Christ wears His wounds still. It is this. Christ is coming to judge the world. Christ has with himself today the accusers of His enemies. Every time that Christ lifts His hands to Heaven, the men that hate Him, or despise Him, are accused. The Jewish nation is brought in guilty every day. The cry is remembered, "His blood be on us and on our children." And the sin of casting Christ away and rejecting Him, is brought before the mind of the Most High. And when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world in righteousness, seated on the great white throne, that hand of His shall be the terror of the universe. "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced," and they shall mourn for their sins. They would not mourn with hopeful penitence in time—they shall mourn with sorrowful remorse throughout eternity. When the multitude are gathered together, when in the valley of Jehoshaphat Christ shall judge the nations, what need He to summon accusers? His own wounds are His witnesses. Why need He summon any to convict men of sin? His own side bears their handiwork. You murderers, did you not do this? You sons of an evil generation did you not pierce the Savior? Did you not nail Him to the tree? Behold these holes in My hand and this stab in My side. These are swift witnesses against you to condemn you!

There is a terrible side, then to this question. A crucified Christ with His wounds still open will be a terrible sight for an assembled universe. "Well," says one of my congregation, "What is that to us? We have not crucified the Savior." No, but let me assure you that His blood shall be on you. If you die unbelievers His blood shall be required at your hand. The death of Christ was worked by the hand of manhood, of all and entire manhood. Others did it for you and though you gave no consent verbally, yet you do assent in your heart every day. As long as you hate Christ you give an assent to His death. As long as you reject His sacrifice and despise His love, you give evidence in your hearts that you would have crucified the Lord of Glory had you been there. No, and you do yourself, so far as you can, crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame. When you laugh at His people, when you despise His Word and mock at His ordinances, you are driving nails into His hands and thrusting the spear into His side. Therefore those open hands and that pierced side shall be witnesses against you, even against you, if you die rejecting Him and enter into eternity enemies to Christ by wicked works.

I think I have thus supplied severe excellent reasons. But now there is one more which I shall offer to your consideration before I come to the lesson which you shall learn. Christ bears those marks in His hands that, as Believers, you may never forget that He has died. We shall need, perhaps, nothing to refresh our memories in Heaven. But still, even if we should, we have it here. When we shall have been in Heaven many a thousand years we shall still have the death of Christ before us—we shall see Him reigning—but can you not conceive that the presence of the wounded Christ

will often stir up the holy hearts of the celestial beings to a fresh outpouring of their grateful songs? They begin the song thus, "Unto Him that lives." Jesus looks upon them and shows His hands and they add, "and was dead and is alive forever more and has the keys of Hell and death." They would not forget that He died. But certainly that part of the song where it said, "and was dead," will have all the more sweetness, because there He sits with the very marks of His passion—with the nailprints of His crucifixion.

If we shall be in Heaven at all constituted as we are on earth, we shall need some visible token to keep us continually in remembrance. Here, you know, the most spiritual saint needs the bread and wine—sweet emblems of the Savior's body. There we shall have nothing to do with emblems, for we shall have the sight of Him. And, I say, if we are in Heaven anything like what we are here, I can imagine that the presence of Jesus may be highly beneficial, may be gloriously precious to the saints in reviving their love continually and causing their hearts, which are like fountains of love, to bubble up afresh and send out again the living water of gratitude and thanksgiving. At any rate, I know this thought is very delightful to me, that I shall see the Man that did hang on Calvary's Cross and that I shall see Him as He did hang there. I delight to see my Savior in all the glories of His Father, but I long to go back and see Him as He was, as well as He is. I think I should sometimes envy Peter and the rest of them that they should have seen Him crucified. Yes, I should say, I see Him glorified, but you saw the most marvelous sight. To see a God is an everyday sight with glorified beings, but to see a God covered with His blood, this is an extraordinary thing. To see Christ glorified, that we may see each day, but to have seen Him on that special occasion, made obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross, that was an extraordinary sight which even angels themselves could see but once. You and I cannot see that. But those wounds are there still manifest and visible and we shall be delighted with the rapturous sight of the Lord in Glory, with His wounds still fresh upon Him. May the Lord grant that we may all be there to see it. May we refresh ourselves with that glorious sight. I can say that I would part with all the joys of sense to view His face. Everything that is good on earth I would give away without a wish, without one single lingering thought, if I might but behold His face and lie in His bosom and see the dear pierced hands and the wide-open side. We must wait His pleasure. A few more rolling suns shall do it. The moon shall rise and wane for us a few more times and then, "We shall see His face and never, never sin. But from the rivers of His Grace, drink endless pleasures in."

III. This brings me now to the third point. WHAT DOES CHRIST MEAN BY SHOWING TO US HIS HANDS AND FEET? He means this—that suffering is absolutely necessary. Christ is the Head and His people are the members. If suffering could have been avoided, surely our glorious Head ought to have escaped. But inasmuch as He shows us His wounds, it is to tell us that we shall have wounds, too. Innocence ought to escape suffering. Did not Pilate mean as much when be said, "I find no fault in Him, therefore let Him go"? But innocence did not escape suffering. Even the Captain of our salvation must be made perfect through suffering. Therefore, we who are guilty, we who are far from being perfect, must not wonder that we have to be wounded, too. Shall the Head be crowned with thorns and do you imagine that the other members of the body are to be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Jesus Christ swim through seas of His own blood to win the crown and are you and I to walk to Heaven dry shod in silver slippers?

No, the wounds of Christ are to teach us that suffering is necessary. In fact, that doctrine was taught upon Mount Calvary. There are only three sorts of men that have ever lived—a good man,

a bad man and the Godman. Now, on Calvary's Cross, I see three characters, I see the thief, the representative of the bad. I see the penitent thief, the representative of the righteous, and I see the God-man in the midst. All three must suffer. Do not imagine for a moment that wicked men get through this world without suffering. Oh, no. The path to Hell is very rough, though it seems smooth. When men will damn themselves, they will not find it a very pleasurable task. The cutting the throat of one's soul is not such a pleasant operation. The drinking the poison of damnation is not, after all, an enviable task. The path of the sinner may seem to be happy, but it is not. It is a gilded deceit. He knows there is bitterness in his heart, even here on earth. Even the wicked must suffer.

But, mark, if any out of the world would have escaped it would be the God-man. But the God-man did not escape. He shows us His wounds. And do you think that you shall remain unwounded? Not if you are His, at any rate. Men sometimes escape on earth. But the true-born child of God must not and would not, if he might, for if he did, he would then give himself cause to say, "I am no part of the body. If I were a part of the body, my Head suffered and so must I suffer, for I am part of His living body." That is the first lesson He teaches us—the necessity of suffering.

But next He teaches us His sympathy with us in our suffering. "There," says He, "see this hand! I am not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. I have suffered, too. I was tempted in all ways like as you are. Look here!—there are the marks—there are the marks. They are not only tokens of My love, they are not only sweet forgetme-nots that bind Me to love you forever—besides that, they are the evidence of My sympathy.

"I can feel for you. Look what I have suffered. Have you a heartache? Ah, look here, what a heartache I had when this heart was pierced. Do you suffer, even unto blood wrestling against sin? So did I. I have sympathy with you." It was this that sustained the early martyrs. One of them declared that while he was suffering he fixed his eyes on Christ. And when they were pinching his flesh—dragging it off with the hot harrows, when they were putting him to agonies so extraordinary that I could not dare to mention them here, lest some of you should faint even under the very narrative—he said, "My soul is not insensible, but it loves." What a glorious speech was that! It loves—it loves Christ. It was not insensible, but love gave it power to overcome suffering, a power as potent as insensibility. "For," said he, "my eyes are fixed on Him that suffered for me and I can suffer for Him. For my soul is in His body. I have sent my heart up to Him. He is my Brother and there my heart is. Plow my flesh and break my bones—smash them with your irons, I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered and He suffers in me now. He sympathizes with me and this makes me strong." Yes, Beloved, lay hold on this in all times of your agony. When you are sweating, think of his bloody sweat. When you are bruised, think of the whips that tore His flesh. And when you are aging, think of His death. And when God hides His face for a little from you, think of, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" This is why He wears His wounds in His hands, that He may show that He sympathizes with you.

Another thing—Christ wears these wounds to show that suffering is an honorable thing. To suffer for Christ is glory. Men will say, "It is glorious to make others suffer." When Alexander rides over the necks of princes and treads nations beneath his feet, that is glorious. The Christian religion teaches us it is glorious to be trod on, glorious to be crushed, glorious to suffer. This is hard to learn. There we see it in our glorified Master. He makes His wounds His glory and His sufferings

are part of the drapery of His regal attire in Paradise. Now, then, it is an honorable thing to suffer. Oh, Christian, when you are overtaken by strange troubles, be not afraid. God is near you. It was Christ's honor to suffer and it is yours, too. The only degree that God gives to His people is the degree of, "Masters in tribulation." If you would be one of God's nobles you must be knighted. Men are knighted with a blow of the sword. The Lord knights us with the sword of affliction. And when we fight hard in many a battle, He makes us barons of the kingdom of Heaven—He makes us dukes and lords in the kingdom of sorrowful honor—not through honor of man, but through dishonor of man—not through joy, but through suffering and grief and agony and death.

The highest honor that God can confer upon His children is the bloodred crown of martyrdom. When I read, as I have been reading lately, the story of the catacombs of Rome and those short, but very pithy inscriptions that are written over the graves of the martyrs, I felt sometimes as it I could envy them. I do not envy them their racks, their hot irons, their being dragged at the heels of horses. But I do envy them when I see them arrayed in the blood-red robe of martyrdom. Who are they that stand nearest to the eternal Throne, foremost of the saints in light? Why, the noble army of martyrs. And just as God shall give us grace to suffer for Christ, to suffer with Christ and to suffer as Christ, just so much does He honor us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings, that God has made, are their troubles, their sorrows and their griefs Let us not, therefore, shun being honored. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us and troubles lift us.

Lastly, there is one sweet thought connected with the wounds of Christ that has charmed my soul and made my heart run over with delight. It is this—I have sometimes thought that if I am a part of Christ's body I am a poor wounded part. If I do belong to that all-glorious whole, the Church, which is His fullness, the fullness of Him that fills all in all, yet have I said within me, "I am a poor maimed part, wounded, full of putrefying sores." But Christ did not leave even His wounds behind Him, even those he took to Heaven. "Not a bone of Him shall be broken," and the flesh, when wounded, shall not be discarded—shall not be left. He shall carry that with Him to Heaven and He shall glorify even the wounded member. Is not this sweet, is not this precious to the troubled child of God? This, indeed, is a thought from which one may suck honey. Poor, weak and wounded though I am, He will not discard me. His wounds are healed wounds—mark—they are not running sores.

And so, though we be the wounded parts of Christ, we shall be healed. Though we shall seem to ourselves in looking back upon what we were upon earth only as wounds, only parts of a wounded body, still we shall rejoice that He has healed those wounds and that He has not cast us away. Precious, precious Truth of God! The whole body He will present before His Father's face and wounded though He is, He shall not cast His own wounds away. Let us take comfort, then, in this. Let us rejoice therein. We shall be presented at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Mark, Christ's wounds are no spots to Him, no wrinkles—they are ornaments. And even those parts of His Church on earth that despair of themselves, thinking themselves to be as wounds, shall be no spots, no wrinkles in the complete Church above, but even they shall be the ornaments and the glory of Christ. Let us now look up by faith and see Jesus, the wounded Jesus, sitting on His Throne. Will not this help us to gird up our loins to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God"?

I cannot send you away without this last remark. Poor Sinner, you are troubled on account of sin. There is a sweet thought for you. Men are afraid to go to Christ, or else they say, "My Sins are so many I cannot go to Him. He will be angry with me." Do you see His hands outstretched to you tonight? He is in Heaven and He still says, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Are you afraid to come? Then, look at His hands—look at His hands—will not that induce you? "Oh," but you say, "I cannot think that Christ can have it in His heart to remember such a worm as I." Look at His side, there is easy access to His heart. His side is open and even your poor prayers may be thrust into that side and they shall reach His heart, holy though it is. Only look to His wounds and you shall certainly find peace through the blood of Jesus. There were two monks of late years in different cells in their convent. They were reading the Bible. One of them found Christ while reading the Scriptures and he believed with a true evangelical faith. The other one was timid and could scarcely think it true. The scheme of salvation seemed so great to him he could scarcely lay hold upon it. But, at last, he lay upon the point to die and he sent for the other to come and sit by him and to shut the door, because if the superior had heard of that of which they were about to speak, he might have condemned them both.

When the monk had sat down, the sick man began to tell how his sins lay heavy on him. The other reminded him of Jesus. "If you would be saved, Brother, you must look to Jesus who did hang upon the Cross. His wounds must save." The poor man heard and he believed. Almost immediately afterwards came in the superior, with the Brethren and the priests. And they began to grease him in extreme unction. This poor man tried to push them away. He could not bear the ceremony and as well as he could, he expressed his dissent. At last his lips were opened and he said in Latin, "Tu vulnera Jesu!"—Your wounds, oh Jesus! Your wounds, oh Jesus!— clasped his hands, lifted them to Heaven, fell back and died.

Oh, I would that many a Protestant would die with these words on his lips! There was the fullness of the Gospel in them. Your wounds, oh Jesus! Your wounds! These are my refuge in my trouble. Oh sinner, may you be helped to believe in His wounds! They cannot fail. Christ's wounds must heal those that put their trust in Him.

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

Luke 24,41 #425 - Too Good to Be True - A Paradox

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE! A PARADOX!

NO. 425

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 15, 1861,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They yet believed not for joy."

Luke 24:41.

THIS is a very strange sentence, but the Christian is a singularly complex being. He is a compound of the fallen and of the perfect. He detects in himself continually an alternation between the almost diabolical and the Divine. Man himself is a contradiction, but the Christian is that contradiction made more paradoxical. He cannot comprehend himself and only those who are like he can understand him. When he would do good he finds evil present with him. How to will he often finds, but how to perform he finds not. He is the greatest riddle in the universe. He can say with Ralph Erskine—

"I'm in my own and others' eyes, A labyrinth of mysteries."

In the case before us the disciples saw Christ manifestly before their eyes. To a certain extent they believed in His resurrection. That belief gave them joy and at once that very joy made them unbelieving. They looked again—they believed once more! Anon, a wave of joy rolled right over the head of their faith and then afresh their doubts returned. What palpitations, what heaving of the heart they had! "It is too good to be true," they said. This is the summing up of the mental process which was going on within—"It is true, how blessed it is. It cannot be true because it is so blessed."

Tonight I shall endeavor to address that timid but hopeful tribe of persons who have heard of the greatness and preciousness of the salvation of Christ and have so far believed, that they have been filled with happiness on account of it, but that very enjoyment has made them doubt and they have exclaimed—"It can not be. It is not possible. This exceeds all my expectations. It is, in fact, too good to be true." I remember to have been myself the subject of this temptation. Overjoyed to possess the treasure which I had found hidden in the field, delighted beyond all measure with the hope that I had an interest in Christ I feared that the gold might be counterfeit—the pearl a cheat, my hope a delusion—my confidence a dream. Newly delivered from the thick darkness, the overwhelming brightness of grace threatened to blind my eyes. Laden with the new favors of a young spiritual life the excessive weight of the mercy staggered my early strength and I was for some time troubled with the thought that these things must be too great a good to be true. If God had been half as merciful or a tithe as kind as He was I could have believed it, but such exceeding riches of His grace were too much. Such out-doings of Himself in goodness, such giving

exceeding abundantly above what one could ask or even think seemed too much to believe.

We will at once attempt to deal with this temptation. First of all, I will try to account for it. Secondly, to recount the reasons which forbid us long to indulge it. And then, thirdly, turn the very temptation itself into a reason why we should be more earnest in seeking these good things.

I. To begin, LET ME ACCOUNT FOR IT. It is little marvel that the spirit is amazed even to astonishment and

doubt when you think of the greatness of the things themselves. The man black with sin says—"My iniquity is great. I deserve the wrath of God. The Gospel presents me with a pardon, full and complete. I have labored to wash out these stains but they will not disappear. The Gospel tells me that the precious blood of Jesus cleans from all sin. Year after year have I revolted and gone astray. The Gospel tells me that He is able to forgive all my sins and to cast my iniquities behind my back." Bowed down with a sense of the greatness of his guilt you may excuse the sinner if he thinks it must be impossible that ever the offenses he has committed could be condoned, or his iniquity could be put away.

"No," he says, "a condemned sinner I am and the promise of a free pardon is too much for me to believe—

"Depths of mercy can there be, Pardon yet reserved for me?"

"No, more," says the poor soul, "I am told that God is prepared to justify me. To give me a perfect righteousness. To look upon me as though I had always been a faithful servant. To regard me to all intents and purposes as though I had kept all His Laws without any offense and had obeyed all His statutes without any exception. According to the Scriptures I am to be robed about with the finished righteousness of Christ, clothed in that garment which He spent His life to work and I am in that garment to stand accepted in the Beloved.

"It is too good to be true," says the soul. "It cannot be. I, the condemned one, accepted? I, who never kept God's Law received as though I had kept it wholly? I, who have broken it, pressed to His bosom as though I were perfect in innocence?" It does startle the soul and well it may. And when the Gospel goes on to add—"Yes, and not only will I justify you but I will adopt you. You shall be no more a servant but a son, no more a bondslave but an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ"—the mind cannot grasp the whole of that thought. "Adopted! Received into His family! Alas," it cries, "I am not worthy to be called God's son."

And as the sinner looks upon its former abject and lost estate and looks upward to the brightness of the inheritance which adoption secures to it, it says—"It is impossible," and like Sarah he laughs saying, "How can this be? How can it be possible that I should attain to these things!" And then the Gospel adds—"Soul, I will not only adopt you but having sanctified you entirely—your whole spirit, soul and body—I will crown you. I will bring you to the mansions of the blessed in the land of the happy. I will put a new song into your mouth and the palm of victory in your hand. The harp of triumph you shall play.

"Your soul will be deluged with delight and your spirit shall bathe itself in everlasting and unbroken peace. Heaven is yours though you deserve Hell. God's glory yours though you deserve wrath." It is little marvel that these things, being so excessively great, the poor broken heart should be like

the captives who returned from Babylon, who were "like men that dream"—

"When God restored our captive state, Joy was our song and grace our theme; The grace beyond our hopes so great, That joy appeared a painted dream."

Another reason for incredulity may be found in our sense of unworthiness. Note the person that receive these mercies and you will not wonder that he believes not for joy. "Ah," says he, "if these things were given to the righteous I could believe it—but to me, an old offender—to me, a hardhearted despiser of the overflowing love of God? To me who has looked on the slaughtered body of the Savior without a tear and viewed the precious blood of redemption without delight? To me, who has blasphemed, who has done despite to the Spirit of His grace and trod underfoot His Truth— oh," says this poor heart, "I could believe it for anyone. I could believe it for the whole world sooner than for myself!"

For you must know that the repenting sinner always has a deeper view of his own sin than of the sin of others and in this he differs from the impenitent—who have very keen eyes to see offenses in other men—but are blind to their own. He verily esteems himself the chief of sinners. He thinks that if anyone could have had the hottest place in Hell that must surely have been his proper portion. And it is so wonderful to him that he should be saved, that his spirit laughs with a kind of incredulity. "What? I, the man who sat in the pot house and could sing a lascivious song? Shall I sit at the right hand of God and be glorified with Christ? What? I, whose heart blasphemed its Creator—whose soul has been a very den of thieves—can I be accepted, washed and saved?"

Brethren, when any of us look back upon our past lives we can find enough ground for astonishment if God has been pleased to choose us. Hence, I say, it is not a strange or a singular thing that the poor heart, from very excess of joy, should be unable to believe. Add to these the strange terms upon which God presents these thing to poor sinners—and the miracle of the manner equals the marvel of the matter. God comes to the sinner and He says not to him, "Do penance. Pass through years of weariness. Renounce every pleasure—become a monk—live in the woods. Make yourself a hermit—torture your body—cut yourself with knives. Starve yourself. Cover yourself with a shirt of hair, or wear a girdle of chain about your loins." No, if He did it would not appear as wonderful.

But He comes to the sinner and He says, "Sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." No works are asked of you—no ceremonies does He demand but simply trust your soul with Christ. Oh, simple words! Oh, easy terms! They are not terms at all for these He gives us—His Spirit enables us to trust in Jesus. If He had demanded us do some great thing we should have been very willing to attempt it, but when it is simply, "wash and be clean"—"Oh," we say, "that simple thing? That easy plan? That scheme which is as well-fitted to the beggar as to the king? As suitable to the poor abandoned prostitute as to the most moral of the Pharisees? That scheme which adapts itself to the ignorant and the rude as well as to the learned and polite?" Our spirit says, "Ah, 'tis a joyous plan," and yet from very joy, it is unable to believe.

And add to this one more thought—the method by which God proposes to work all this. That is to say He proposes to pardon and to justify the sinner instantaneously. The plan of salvation requires not months nor weeks in which his sin may be put away. It is finished. An instant is enough to receive it and in that instant the man is saved. The moment a man believes in Christ, not some of

his sins, but all his sins are forgiven. Just as when God blew with His wind the Egyptians were all drowned at once in the waters of the Red Sea and Moses said, "You shall see them no more forever,"

So, when once we believe in Christ the breath of God's pardoning love blows upon the waters and our sins sink into the bottom like a stone. There is not one, not one of them left. It is as when a man takes a bond— you are his debtor. He can imprison you, but he holds the bond over the candle flame and he says, "See here!" And when it is burned, your whole debt, though it were ten or twenty thousand pounds is gone in a moment! So does faith—it sees the handwriting of the ordinances that was against us taken away and nailed to Christ's Cross. Now this does seem a surprising thing. It is so surprising that when men have heard it for the first time they have been willing to run anywhere to listen to it again.

This was the secret of Whitfield's popularity. The Gospel was a new thing in his age to the mass of the people. They were like blind men who, having had their eyes opened and being suddenly taken out at night to view the stars could not refrain from clapping their hands for joy! The first sight of land is always blessed to the sailor's eyes. And the men of those days felt that they saw Heaven in the distance and the port of peace. It is no wonder that they rejoiced even to tears. It was glad tidings to their spirits and there were some then, as there are now who could not believe by reason of their excessive joy.

Possibly John Bunyan alludes to this singular unbelief in his sweet picture of Mercy's dream wherein, like Sarai, she laughed. Let me tell it to you in his own words—"In the morning, when they were awake, Christiana said to Mercy, What was the matter that you did laugh in your sleep tonight? I suppose you were in a dream. MERCY—So I was and a sweet dream it was; but are you sure I laughed? CHRISTIANA—Yes you laughed heartily; but please, Mercy, tell me your dream. MERCY—I was dreaming that I sat all alone in a solitary place and was bemoaning of the hardness of my heart. Now I had not sat there long, but I thought many were gathered about me to see me and to hear what it was that I said. So they hearkened and I went on bemoaning the hardness of my heart.

"At this, some of them laughed at me. Some called me fool and some began to thrust me about. With that, I thought I looked up and saw one coming with wings towards me. So he came directly to me and said, 'Mercy, what ails you?' Now, when he had heard me make my complaint, he said, 'Peace be to you! He also wiped mine eyes with his handkerchief and clad me in silver and gold. He put a chain about my neck and earrings in my ears and a beautiful crown upon my head. Then he took me by the hand and said, 'Mercy, come after me!' So he went up and I followed till we came to a golden gate. Then he knocked. And, when they within had opened, the man went in and I followed him up to a Throne, upon which One sat. And He said to me, 'Welcome, Daughter!' The place looked bright and twinkling, like the stars, or rather like the sun. And I thought that I saw your husband there; so I awoke from my dream. But did I laugh?"

Well might her mouth be filled with laughter to see herself so favored! II. Having thus tried to account for this state of the heart may I have

the help of God while I try to DO BATTLE WITH THE EVIL THAT IS IN IT— THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST! Troubled Heart, let me remind you, first of all that you have no

need to doubt the Truth of the precious Revelation because of its greatness—for He is a great God who makes it to you. Did you expect that He, the King of Heaven, rich in mercy and abundant in long-suffering, would send little grace, little love and little pity to the sons of men? What says the Scripture of Araunah the Jebusite?—"All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king." But what shall we say of God? Shall He give like a king? Yes, He is King of kings and He gives as kings can never give. When Alexander bade his officer demand what reward he pleased, he asked so much that he nearly emptied the treasury—and when the treasurer refused to pay it and came to Alexander and said, "This man is unreasonable. He asks too much." "No," said the conqueror, "he asks of Alexander and he measures what he asks by my dignity."

So be it your remembrance that God will not give meanly and stingily, for that were unworthy of Him. But He will give splendidly and magnificently for this is after His own nature. Expect, therefore, that He will save great sinners in a great and glorious way and give them great mercies for the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. The riches of His grace are inexhaustible. He is the Father of mercies and He begets mercies by thousands and by millions to supply his people's needs.

You meet a poor man and you are hungry. If he were hospitable he might say, "Come in, Sir and you may have a part of my crust." You go in and you find a scanty meal upon the table and you say, "What you have given me is all you had to give. I thank you for it." But what would you think if you waited at the royal door and received a royal invitation and, when you went in, were fed with dry crusts and drops of water? You would think this not becoming a king. Now if your friend has been offended and he is willing to forgive, you are grateful to him—for he does perhaps his best—but God stands at His gate with His tables laden with a rich hospitality. "My oxen and My fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come you to the supper." Let no low thought of God come in to make you doubt His power to save you. Have high thoughts of God and this snare of the fowler will be broken.

Again—let me remind you that the greatness of God's mercy should encourage you to believe that it comes from God. If I could take you suddenly, blindfold you and carry you away you knew not where and then, loosing the bandage from your eyes, should say, "Look here. It is all gold on every side, thick slabs of gold and there is a pick-axe—take it and use it." You begin and turn up blocks of ore—would you have any idea at the time that this was put there by men? "No," you say, "this is God's mine, the infinite bounty of the Creator. Not the scanty contrivance of nature." The abundance of the treasure proves to you that it cannot be the treasure house of man.

Now, you open your eyes in this building tonight and you see a gas light. "Well," you say, "it is very good—a very good light in its way, but I can see it is man's light." Go out and see the moon's light—did you ever think that man made that? Or wait till tomorrow morning and look up at the sun—wait till noonday when he is shedding down his brightness and gilding the fields with tints of glory and I think you will say, "Ah, I shall never mistake this for man's work. It is so exceeding bright that nothing that man can ever achieve in the way of illumination can be at all comparable to it."

Thus the greatness of the light makes you believe in the Divinity that ordained it. If you should see tomorrow a heavy shower of rain, you would not believe, I suppose, that it was made with a watering-pot. And if you saw the Thames swollen to its banks from a great flood, you would not

believe that the London waterworks had filled it to its brim. "No," you say, "this is God at work in nature. The greatness of the work proves that God is here." If you were ever in Cambridge, you might have seen a little mountain which is so small that nobody knows who made it. Some say it is artificial. Some say it is natural. Now I have never heard any dispute about the Alps—nobody ever said that they were artificial.

I never heard of any disputation about the Himalayas—no one ever conjectured that human hands piled them up to the skies and clothed them with their hoary snows. So when I read of the mercies of God in Christ— reaching up like mountains to Heaven—I am sure they must be Divine. I am certain the Revelation must come from God—it must be true. It is selfevident. I might enlarge this argument by showing that God's works in creation are very great and therefore it were idle to think that there would be no great works in grace. Two works which have been made by the same artist always have some characteristics which enable you to see that the same artist made them.

In like manner, to us there is one God. Creation and redemption have but one Author. The same eternal power and Godhead are legibly inscribed on both. Now when I look at the sea and hear it roaring in the fullness thereof I see a great Artist there. And when my soul assays the ocean of grace and listens to the echoes of its motion as the sound of many waters, I see the same Almighty Artist. When I see a great sinner saved, then I think I see the same Master-hand which first formed man and curiously wrought his substance, endowing him with powers so great that they baffle our understanding. But if I only met with little specimens of grace, with narrow gifts and stumped benedictions, I might say—"These may be of man, for man can do many things and possibly as he has done little things in creation, he can do little things in grace." But when we meet with astounding conversions, with marvelous forgiveness, we are sure this must be God because it is so great and so far beyond all human comprehension.

Let me remind you again that you may get another argument to put an end to your fears about the greatness of God's mercy from the greatness of His Providence. Did you ever think how much food God gives to His creatures every year? How much fine wheat He lays upon the earth that we may feed thereon! Have you remembered the vest machinery with which He feeds the thousand minions of men that are upon the face of the globe? When Xerxes led his millions from Persia to Greece there was a very great and cumbrous system to carry on the commissary so that all the host might be fed. And even as it were, many of them were starved.

But here are millions upon minions and God feeds them. No, enlarge the thought. There are the fowls of Heaven that are countless—did you ever pick up a dead sparrow that had been starved to death? I never did. Think of the sharp winters and the birds, somehow or other, without barn or granary, find their food. Look at the minions and million of fish in the sea, swimming tonight and searching for their food and your heavenly Father feeds all these. Look at the innumerable insects creeping upon the earth, or dancing in the summer sunbeam—all supplied. Look at the behemoth who makes the deep to he hoary with roaring. Look at huge leviathan, the elephant, the crocodile and those other mighty creatures of God's strength to go through the deep or through the forests. These He supplies in Providence.

And if He is so lavish here, do you think that in the masterpiece of His hand—His grace—He is stinted and narrowed? God forbid! 'Twere hard to believe in littleness of special love when we see greatness of common goodness towards the sons of man. "Oh," says one, "but I am thinking of my

unworthiness and that this does not meet it." Well, this will meet it— there is a country where there had been a drought and the land is all parched and chapped. That field of corn there belongs to a good man. That field over yonder belongs to an infidel. That one over there belongs to a blasphemer. That one is cultivated by a drunkard. That other one belongs to a man who lives in every known vice.

Here comes a cloud! Blessed be God here comes a cloud which sails along through the sky. Where will it go? It is big with rain. It will make the poor dried-up germ revive. There will be a harvest yet—which way will it go? "Of course," you say, "It will only go in the corner where the godly man has his field." No, not so. It spreads its rich mange over the entire sky and the shower of mercy falls upon the just and the unjust, upon the thankful and upon the unthankful. It falls just as plenteously where the blasphemer is the possessor as where the gracious man lifts up his heart in prayer. Now what does this show us? God blesses ungodly men, unthankful men!

And I hold that as grace is always in analogy with nature, God is ready tonight to bless blasphemers, graceless men, careless men, drunken men, men who ask not His favor but who, nevertheless, if God wills to save them, shall certainly receive His salvation! He shall have His mercy brought into their souls and they shall live. To turn the point a moment and argue again. "Soul," you say, "I cannot believe, because the mercy is so great." Would anything but great mercy suit your case at all? Say, would little gains serve your case? Must you not say with Baxter, "Lord, give me great mercy or no mercy, for nothing short of great mercy can answer my desire?" You need a great Christ. You want One that can wash away foul offenses. He is just such an One as you need.

Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him now! Besides, what have you to do with asking questions at all? What God gives you to do, is it not yours to do? He tells you, "Trust My Son and I will save you through His blood." Sinner, ask no questions. Be it right or wrong, the responsibility will not rest with you if you will do as God bids you do. If the Spirit of God should now constrain you to trust Christ, should you perish, then you can say, "I perished doing as God bade me." That can never be. You will be the first that ever did perish so. May God enable you at this very moment to take Him at His word and to trust your soul in Jesus' hands!

III. I close by USING YOUR VERY FEARS AS AN ENTICEMENT TO BELIEVE.

If it is so joyous only to think of these things, what must it be to possess them? If it gives such a weight to your spirit only to think of being pardoned, adopted, accepted and saved—what must it be really to be washed? You can not make a guess. But this I can tell you—the first moment I believed in Christ, I had more real happiness in one tick of the clock than in all the years before. Oh, to be forgiven! It is enough to make a man leap! Yes, to leap three times as John Bunyan puts it and go on his way rejoicing.

Forgiven! Why, a rack becomes a bed of down! The flames become our friends when we are forgiven. Justified! No more condemnation! Oh, the joy of that! The happiness of the slave when he lands on freedom's shore is nothing compared with the delight of the believer when he gets out of the land of the enemy. Speak we of the joy of the poor captive who has been chained to the oar by the corsair and who at last is delivered? The breaking of his chain is not one-half such melodious music to him as the breaking of our chains to us. "He took me out of the horrible pit and

out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a Rock and put a new song into my mouth and established my goings"__

"I will praise You every day, Now Your anger's passed away; Comfortable thoughts arise From the bleeding sacrifice. Jesus is become at length My salvation and my strength; And His praises shall prolong, While I live, my pleasant song."

Talk not of the joys of the dance, or of the flush of wine. Speak not of the mirth of the merry, or of the flashes of the ambitious and successful. There is a mirth more deep than these. A joy more intense. A bliss more enduring than anything the world can give.

It is the bliss of being forgiven. The bliss of having God's favor and God's love in one's soul. The bliss of feeling that God is our Father. That Christ is married to our souls. And that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and will abide with us forever. Let the sweetness of the mercy draw you, poor soul! Let the sweetness of the mercy, I say, entice you! But you say, "May I have it?" Come and welcome, come and welcome, sinner, come! When you get outside of this place you will see opposite to the Elephant and Castle a fountain. If you are thirsty, go and drink. There is nobody there to say, "You must not come. You are not fit." It is put there on purpose for the thirsty.

And if tonight you want Christ—if you feel in your souls a desire to be partakers of His salvation, He stands there in the highway of the Gospel and He is free to every thirsty soul. No need to bring your silver cups or your golden vases. You may come with your poverty. No need, my poor Friend, that you should wait until you have learned to read well or have studied the classics. You may come in your ignorance just as you are. No need, my poor erring Brother, that you should wait till you should thoroughly reform. You may come and do your reformation afterwards. Come to Jesus as you are, just as you are! He will wash the filthy, clothe the naked, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, enrich the penniless and raise to glory those who seem to be sinking down to Hell!

Oh, may God draw some tonight, some who have come in here out of curiosity to hear the strange preacher. Some who only hope to see the strange man seeking to win souls by telling them earnestly God's simple Truth! May the Master lay hold of some tonight, yes, tonight! Had I the power to plead as Paul did—could I utter impassioned words like those of the seraphic Whitfield—O could I plead with you as a man pleads for his life, as a mother pleads for her child—so would I say to you and beseech you that you be reconciled to God! My strength fails. The Truth has been uttered. Hear it! May you receive it!

"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"—thus spoke our Lord and Master—"He that believes not shall be damned." Believe and make profession of your faith for whosoever with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession, shall be saved. May the Lord bless the joy of the tidings to the rejoicing of our heart, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

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

Luke 24,41-45 #2279 - Joy Hindering Faith

JOY HINDERING FAITH

NO. 2279

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 25, 1890.

"And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He

said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave

Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.

And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said

unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you,

while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled,

which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the

Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.

And He opened their understanding, that

they might understand the Scriptures."

Luke 24:41-45.

THE disciples were gathered together with the doors of the house fast

closed, for they were afraid of the Jewish mob. Suddenly HE came, HE who was chief in their thoughts, the Christ whom they had seen dead upon the Cross, whom some of them had helped to bury! There He stood before them and, "they were terrified and frightened." As on a former occasion, on the Sea of Galilee, so now they said, "It is a spirit," and they cried out for fear. The Savior did His best to correct their minds of their mistake. He said to them, "Handle Me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." He went as far as He well could go to prove that He was a real Man, composed of real flesh and bones.

Then they believed, for it was perfectly clear that He had risen from the dead and was in their midst. They had hardly begun to believe that their Lord was really with them before it seemed too good to be true! A wave of joy came rolling up and then appeared to be sucked back, again, and

they seemed to be sucked back by it. They believed not for joy—they were astounded—they were full of wonder. They did believe, otherwise they would have had no joy, but the very joy swallowed up the thing of which it was born and they did not believe because of the excess of joy! This is an experience which has been very common and I merely take this text, tonight, that I may deal with some persons who have found Christ, and are saved, but who are now troubled because it seems too good to be true.

First, then, tonight, I shall speak, if I have the strength to do so, upon the difficulty under which they labored—"They yet believed not for joy." Secondly, I shall speak upon the manner in which our Lord helped them to get over the difficulty. He first ate a piece of fish and a portion of a hon

Volume 38 1eycomb in their presence—and then opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

I. First, then, THE DIFFICULTY UNDER WHICH THEY LABORED. "They believed not for joy."

This is not the only instance in which joy has seemed to stop the flow of faith. It has occurred on other occasions. You have an early instance of it in the Book of Genesis. Will you kindly turn to Genesis 45:25-26? Jacob had lost his beloved Joseph. He believed him to be dead. He had been shown a bloody coat which he knew was his son's. But now the brothers come back from Egypt with news that Joseph is yet alive and is governor over all the land of Egypt! "And they went up out of Egypt and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." It was too good to be true and his heart sank within him! "You must be deceiving me," he said. He knew that his sons had been liars before. Indeed, if this report were true, they had been liars before, and now he cannot believe their news—it is too much for him—and the old man swoons away. So have I met with many who had been told that Christ had saved them and they believed it—but after believing it, it seemed as if it was presumption to believe any such thing—and they were thrown back into doubt and despondency.

Job was once in a similar condition, for he says in his Book, (9:16)—"If I had called, and He had answered me; yet would I not believe that He had hearkened unto my voice." He had such a fear of God. He saw so much of his own unworthiness and of God's greatness, that he says that if he had prayed, and God had heard him, he could not have believed it to be true! This is a more spiritual case than that of Jacob, but it makes a very good parallel instance as to the fact that joy, itself, may cause unbelief.

The same idea comes up in Psalms 126:1-6. You remember the words, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like they that dream." They seemed to say, "We could not believe it! We thought it was all imagination, a freak of fancy, the high play of spirits in dreamland— surely it cannot be true."

If you need another case, you have that of Peter as recorded in the 12th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. When Peter had been brought out of prison, the angel led him into the street and he found that he was free, but he "knew not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision." He could not believe that every barrier to his escape had been removed and that he was really out of prison! There is a young woman mentioned in the same chapter, who was very much of the same mind as Peter. Read the 13th and 14th verses—"And as Peter knocked at

the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate." Why did she not let him in? Ah, she was too joyful to do that!

As the woman at the well left her waterpot when she found Christ, so did Rhoda leave Peter standing outside the door—she was too joyful to let him in! A hungry man, when he at last finds bread, may be too joyful to eat. A thirsty man may come to the fountain and, for a moment, be too joyful to stoop down and drink of its cooling stream. Men and women are strange paradoxes. We are made up of paradoxes—we are the most curious creatures in all the world! We believe and get joyful, and then we disbelieve because we are joyful, for we think that it cannot be true joy, or true faith! I do not understand you, my Brothers and Sisters, because I do not understand myself! And I do not believe that you understand yourselves, either! The mercy is that you do not need to understand yourselves—you are in the hands of a Great Physician who knows all about you and who will prescribe for you when you cannot even tell what is the matter with yourself!

I have given you these instances out of the Scriptures, but such cases are common enough in our experience. Here is one who has heard preached the doctrine of immediate salvation by faith. He understands that—

"The moment a sinner believes, And trusts in His crucified God, His pardon at once he receives, Redemption in full through His blood."

He has believed and he has received! Redemption in full and now he says to himself, "Can it really be true? What? All my sins forgiven? Am I whiter than snow? That great sin of mine that seemed to turn all my being to crimson and scarlet—is that washed out?" It seems too good to be true and the man's doubts come thick upon him by reason of the very greatness of the pardon which he has grasped!

Suppose, further, that it is whispered in his ear, "You are redeemed from among men by a special redemption, for Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep and you are a part of His Church—you are one of His sheep and, therefore, specially and peculiarly redeemed out of mankind." As he turns it over, he believes in a general redemption for all sinners—but he cannot believe in this special, peculiar, effective Substitution—and he says to himself, "It is too wonderful to be mine. For me to have a special part in what Christ did, how can that be?" You first rejoice because you believe it and then you begin to doubt it because you rejoice! Perhaps it is whispered in your ear still further, "You were chosen from before the foundation of the world! You are espoused to Christ, married to Him in an everlasting wedlock. You are a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. And because He lives, you shall also live—you shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His Glory." You feel so full of delight that you can hardly bear yourself—but you have scarcely begun to be delighted before the whisper comes, "It is too good to be true. It must all be a mistake." And so you believe not for joy.

Suppose that you should sometimes have those high enjoyments, those love feasts, those banquets in the Hall of Love with Christ? Suppose that you should come to lean your head, with holy John, upon His bosom and not only know His love, but be caught up, as it were, into the third Heaven of immediate fellowship with Him? Now you feel as if you could die for very joy, until there

comes this cold, shivering doubt, "You are altogether mistaken! You are a mere fanatic! You are an enthusiast, for God could not have admitted a man such as you, into such close fellowship." Often have I met with persons troubled in this manner—and it is to them that I speak.

Now, let me ask, what is the occasion of this difficulty? Why do we get these doubts about the great mercy of God? I answer, first, because of a deep sense of unworthiness. If any man here could see himself as he is, and then could see the fullness of God's love to him, I believe that it would make every individual hair of his head stand upright with astonishment and, next to that, it would carry him right away with a ravishment of adoring wonder. "Such a wretch, such a beast, such an almost devil as I was and yet loved of God!" It would startle him. Hear how David puts it, "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You have held me by my right hand." The sense of our own unworthiness makes it seem too good to be true that we should really be saved.

Next, the custom of fear in which some of us were found creates this difficulty. We were accustomed to think despairingly of our sin. Month after month some of us could see no hope—no, not a ray of light—so that when the Light of God did come, it was too much for our poor eyes. Have you never gone suddenly into the light and found yourself less able to see than you were when you were in the dark?—

"When God revealed His gracious name And changed my mournful state, My rapture seemed a pleasing dream, The Grace appeared so great,"

because of the mournful state in which I had been before.

Then, perhaps, most of all, it seems hard to believe because of the intensity of our former anxiety. These disciples had been intensely thoughtful about Christ and anxious about Him—and that was why they could not, in a moment, believe that He was really risen from the dead. And when a man has been thinking long about his soul. When he has felt his sin like lead. When he has looked into the awful burnings of Infinite Justice. When he has heard, as it were, the sentence, "Depart, you cursed," ringing in his ears, do you wonder that he needs to be quite sure that he is really forgiven? He cannot take that for granted. He looks, and looks, and looks, and looks again—and he cannot rest till he is certain that his sin is all blotted out and that he is "accepted in the Beloved." Hence, even the very delightfulness of the idea of being justified by faith in Christ causes a doubt to enter the heart.

Further, I do not wonder that the doubt comes in when you think of the simplicity of the way of salvation. Look! I have been for years trying to save myself. I have gone to Abana and Pharpar and washed, and washed, and washed, and I am still a leper. And then, one day, I do but believe, I do but go and wash in Jordan and at once my leprosy is gone! I should think that if the woman, whose issue of blood was staunched when she touched the hem of Christ's garment and felt in her body that she was healed of that plague, she must also have had, a moment after, the fear, "But surely it will come back again! I cannot have been cured in so simple a way! I have been to all the doctors and have spent all my money and only grew worse. Am I really healed?" So, when a sinner sees himself saved by nothing but believing—by simply trusting Christ—do you wonder that an early thought with him is, "This must be too good to be true—to be saved so simply"?

Add to this the immediateness of Divine Grace and you understand where the difficulty arises. If it took a month to save a man. If it took seven years to put sin away, I could understand that by degrees we should come to believe in the process, though I do not know but what we might very likely get fresh doubts out of that process! But to be saved in a moment—to pass from death to life in less than the twinkling of an eye! To have all sin forgiven more quickly than a watch can tick—this is the work of salvation! This is the giving of the new birth, the passing of the act of indemnity and oblivion—and this takes no time whatever!—

"Tis done! The great transaction's done; I am my Lord's, and He is mine."

And then the saved soul turns around and says, "Can it be true that I am really saved—I who was, just now, in the very depths of despair?"

Now, I am only going to deal with this difficulty in the following few words to show you that it has no solid basis. You say, "Can this be true?" because it is so good. My answer is—You need something good, do you not? You need something greatly good! Could anything save you but a great act of Grace? Tell me. Are you not of Richard Baxter's mind when he prayed, "Lord, give me great mercy, or no mercy; for little mercy will not serve my purpose"? If anybody says, "It is too good to be true," say, "It is no better than I need. I need perfect pardon! I need complete renewal! I need to be made a child of God. I need to be saved." It is not too good to be true, for it is not too good to be what you need!

Do you not think, also, that great things belong to God? Do you expect God to be little in His mercy, little in His gifts, little in His Grace? You make a great mistake if you do, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than man's ways. The greatness of the goodness which you receive should be to you a letter of commendation. If it were little, it might come from man. If it is too great to come from man, that proves that it comes from God! Let the greatness rather reassure you than cause you to doubt. When a doubt arises from the simple way of salvation, let me put this to you—What other way would save you? I know that I shall never get to Heaven by any way but the way of faith. I have not even a fragment of confidence in anything that I have ever done, or ever designed to do—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all, But Jesus Christ is my All in All."

O my dear Hearer, you may surely be content with a way that suits you—the way of believing! "It is very easy," you say. It is not too easy for you—you could not go a harder way. To faint away into the arms of Christ and throw your whole weight upon Him, let it not seem too simple for you, for this is all that you can do. Yes, and more than you ever will do unless the Grace of God leads you to do it! Do not, therefore, doubt the way because it is so simple. What other way would you have? Once more, do not say that the gift of God's Grace is too good to be true, for those of us who live in the daily enjoyment of it are, by nature, no better than you and yet it has come to us! Why should it not come to you? I never saw the man yet whom I would have put behind myself in the matter of salvation. If I had had to guess which man in this congregation would not be saved, I would not have guessed any man but myself. I stood in the rear rank—not that I had openly sinned worse than others, but there were certain elements of character that caused me to despair. Yet I was fetched in by God's Grace and why should not you, also, be brought in? "Ah," you say, "I am a very odd person." So am I—you are not odder than I am! "Oh!" says one, "but I am such a strange

body." So am I. I am a lot out of all the catalogs. Whoever you are, be you who you may, come along to Christ! He cannot cast you away for He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Come to Christ, dear Friend, and He will not cast you out! This Truth of God is not too good to be true! If I have not found it too good to be true, you will not find it too good to be true. Lay hold of it and believe it.

Thus I have tried to set before you the difficulty that the disciples were in when they believed not for joy.

II. Now, in the second place, I shall only be able to speak briefly upon THE MANNER IN WHICH OUR LORD HELPED THEM TO GET OVER THE DIFFICULTY.

Of course, their main point was that they could not believe that Jesus was risen from the dead—it seemed too good to be true.

The Lord helped them out, first, by a fuller view of what He could do. They had handled Him. They had seen and felt that He was real substantial materialism, composed of flesh and blood, which spirits have not. He takes a piece of fish and eats it. He takes a piece of honeycomb, dripping with honey, and eats it and, as I think, He gave them a part of the same food. If they were not satisfied with looking at Him and handling Him, they would have a further evidence that He was in the body, for He could eat and drink like any other individual.

Now, I pray the Lord to give to any here who say, "It is too good to be true," a clearer view of Himself. If you will think more of Him who brings you this great salvation, you will not be less astonished, but you will be less doubtful. Think of who He was, God, in the bosom of the Father, and the Father, in giving Him, gave Himself! It is no trifling salvation, depend upon it, that God comes to work out. If it had been a small salvation, He might have sent Gabriel and said to him, "Go and save those sinners." But as God Himself comes to do the work, you may depend upon it that it is a great salvation!

And when our Lord came here, He not only lived and labored, but He suffered. He was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was mocked, spit upon, scourged, crucified. He died. He who only has Immortality, died! Does that Cross over yonder mean a little salvation? Do the groans of Christ mean little gifts for men? Do those gory shoulders, plowed by the lash, mean trifles for trifling sinners? Do the five wounds and the cruel scorn, and the great passion all mean a small salvation for sinners? Oh, no, Beloved, they mean great salvation for giant sinners, the sons of Anak, a great salvation for the biggest sinners that ever lived! Think of the Cross of Calvary and Christ on it and you will never say that the great salvation He worked out is too good to be true!

But He is alive, again, and He has gone up yonder, through the shining ranks of cherubim and seraphim, to the Throne of God. And what is He doing? Pleading for sinners, making intercession for the transgressors! Is that a little thing for which the Christ prays? He might have made one of His saints to be the intercessor if it had been some trifling thing, but it is a great, priceless, infinite blessing for which Christ prays before the Father!

Listen, once more. Christ has joined the Glory of His name with the work of salvation. He cares more to be a Savior than to be a King! His highest Glory comes from His rescuing men from going down into the Pit. Creation glorifies God. The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God

shouted for joy when the world was made, but God did not think that was a work to rejoice over—He merely said that it was good. He could have made 50 more worlds, yes, fifty million worlds, if He had pleased! But when Jesus saves men by laying down His life for His chosen, it is written, "He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Think of Jehovah, the Triune God, bursting into song! He sings—for all His Glory is wrapped up in the salvation of men! Is it, then, a trifle? No! I rejoice in the greatness of salvation and believe in it all the more because it is so great and so worthy of the Glory of God! I hope that neither you nor I will fall into the difficulty of the disciples when they believed not for joy.

But now our Savior did another thing. After thus manifesting Himself, He began to open up to them the Scriptures. Ah, that is what we all need for the removal of our doubts! The least read Book in the world, in proportion to its circulation, is the Bible. I believe that "Jack the Giant Killer" is more read than the Bible in proportion to the number of persons who have the books. It is sad that it should be so. There is the daily paper and there is the weekly religious paper, as it is called, and these two, together, put on the table—hide the Bible! We need to read our Bibles more—we must read our Bibles more! If we do, what shall we read there?

Well, we shall read of a great Fall that took place in the Garden of Eden. You know, they tell us, now, that when Adam fell, he broke his little finger—and it was fixed up—and he recovered. But that is not what the Bible says. He broke his neck and a great deal more than his neck! Oh, what a fall was there, my Brothers and Sisters! You and I and all of us fell down. It was a fall which dislocated man altogether. Well, now, for a great fall, you must have a great salvation. Therefore do not be astonished when you read of a great salvation! It is involved in the meaning of the great disaster of the Fall.

Then, the Fall brought on great depravity. Although they make it out, now, that man, through the Fall, has only suffered very slightly, just a little toothache, or something of that sort, yet the Scripture does not tell us so. His whole head is sick and his whole heart faint, and from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head he is nothing but wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Now you must have a great salvation to meet this great depravity! There must be a great work of Grace to turn this ship right-about, to lay a mighty hand upon the helm and reverse its course!

Next, Beloved, if you read the Bible carefully, you will find that there is such a thing as great sin. Ah, you do not need to read your Bible for that! Reading your own heart, by the light of the Bible, and remembering that every evil thought as well as every evil word, yes, and every evil imagination, is sin before God, you will see what a mass of sin one single human being is defiled with! You need a great salvation because of great sin!

Further, if you read your Bibles, you will find that there is a great Hell. Everything in the Bible is according to scale. When men talk of a little Hell, it is because they think they have only a little sin and believe in a little Savior—it is all little together! But when you get a great sense of sin, you need a great Savior, and feel that if you do not have Him, you will fall into a great destruction and suffer a great punishment at the hands of the Great God! As you would escape a great Hell, believe in a great salvation and never be staggered because it is great.

And then there is a great Heaven. Oh, what a Heaven! Have any of us any idea of what it will be like? We sit and meditate upon it. We sing about it and we sometimes half think that we are there—but we are not by a very long way. When we once get inside the gates, we shall say, with the Queen of Sheba, "The half was not told me."—

"Then 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."

To get you there, you must have a great salvation. Therefore, do not begin to say, "It is too good to be true." Come, now, surely you are not going to be a fool and have the world and give up your hope of going to Heaven! I am often wonderstruck at the way in which God, in His infinite love, makes some men go the way that they never thought of going.

There are persons in this house, tonight, with whom I have conversed lately, children of ungodly parents, brought up in the midst of worldly amusements. Suddenly, softness fell upon their hearts and they began to think! The things that they loved, they began to loathe. They could not tell why. They sought the House of Prayer, they learned the way of salvation and laid hold on Christ. When they go home tonight, there is not one of the family that will welcome them, and they, themselves, strove hard to get away when God began to work upon their heart. But the harpooner in this pulpit, by God's Grace, sent a harpoon in so deep that, whales as they were, they could never get it out! They dived deep into the sea of greater sin—but that harpoon held them. The next time that they came up to breathe, they got another harpoon, and they were, at last, wounded to such an extent that they had to yield! And now they are yielding, with the full concurrence of their will, to the Lord who has mastered them and led them captive—and now leads them in triumph! Glory be to God for this! You have to go to Heaven, my Friend—you are bound for Glory—and you will go there. There is a tug, just in front of you, that will draw you there, and you shall not be lost on the way. Why, if such is your grand destiny, do not wonder that, on the voyage, you have great things from God almost too great, at times, to be believed!

I have done when I have said one thing more. If even joy, sometimes, hinders our believing, do not let us think much about joy, or much about sorrow. The man who always thinks about being comfortable is generally the most uncomfortable being in the world! And the man who is always thinking about being happy goes the right way to work to be always unhappy! If we are to be saved by our feelings, we shall get saved and lost every other day, for we are just like the weather-glass. They said to me, yesterday, "The glass is going back." Very likely it was, but it does not rain, for all that. Another day they say, "The glass is going up," and then I find it generally does rain, so I give up the glasses and begin to wonder whether there is any truth in them at all!

Sometimes my feelings say to me, "You are no child of God," and then I begin to pray, and so I know that my feelings have deceived me. Another time they say to me, "Oh, you are a child of God, that is certain!" And then I get as proud as Lucifer—and that a child of God should never be! What is the good of looking to your feelings at all? Walk by faith! Believe the Gospel! Cling to God's promises! If they fail you, all is lost. But they cannot fail you! Rest in the finished work of Christ, but as for joys and sorrows—

"Let them come, and let them go, Fickle as the winds that blow."

You need place no reliance upon them. Hold on to this—"Christ died for the ungodly." "He that believes in Him is justified from all things." "He that believes in Him is not condemned." Hold you to that and then come what will, sink or swim, all will be well with your souls!

The Lord bring us all to that blessed condition, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

Luke 24:13-48.

Verses 13-15. And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus, Himself, drew near, and went with them. When two saints are talking together, Jesus is very likely to come and make the third one in the company! Talk of Him and you will soon talk with Him. I would that Believers more often spoke, the one to the other, about the things of God! It has been said that in the olden time, God's people spoke often, one to another, but now we have altered that, and God's people speak often one against another. It is an alteration, but it certainly is not an improvement. May we get together, again, and, like these two disciples, talk of all the things that happened in Jerusalem 18 centuries ago! If we have less of reasoning than they had, let us have more of communion. 16. But their eyes were restrained that they should not know Him. Christ was there, but they did not perceive Him. Our eyes may be very easily shut so that we do not see Christ even when He is close to us. We see a thousand things, but we miss the Master.

17. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that you have, one to another, as you walk, and are sad? Christian people, why are you sad? It should not be so! And when you talk, why do you increase each other's sadness? Is that wisdom? Surely the Master might say to some here present, "Why are you sad?" I hope that He will enable you to shake off the sadness and to rejoice in Him.

18-20. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto Him, Are you only a stranger in Jerusalem, and have not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. These were sad things to talk about. They thought that they had lost all when they had lost Christ—and yet there is no theme in all the world that is more full of joy than talk about the crucified Christ! This is strange, is it not? If we look beneath the surface, we shall see that the darkest deed that was ever perpetrated has turned out to be the greatest blessing to mankind—and that the cruelest crime ever committed by mortal man has been made the channel of the greatest benediction of God!

21-23. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. How innocently they tell the story! How they convict themselves of stark unbelief! And the Master hears it all patiently and quietly. What a strange sensation it must have been for Him to hear them talking

about Him in this amazing way when, all the while, they did not know who the "stranger" was to whom they were speaking! Have you ever thought of what the Savior must think of many things that we say? We think them wise, but they must be very foolish to the eyes of His infinite wisdom, and very shallow to Him who sees everything to the bottom.

24, 25. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not. He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken. He loved them tenderly, but He rebuked them strongly—I had almost said sternly—"O fools, and slow of heart!" I am afraid that is our name—"fools." I am afraid that it may be said of us that we are "slow of heart to believe." We need so many proofs. We very readily disbelieve, but we very slowly believe! If you had a piano in your house and you left it for months—and when you came back, you found it all in beautiful tune, you would be sure that somebody must have been there to keep it in tune! But if, on the other hand, you left it to itself and it got out of tune, you would say that such a condition was only what was to be expected. So it is natural for us to get out of tune! Sometimes we ring out glad music on the high sounding cymbals and we lift up the loud hallelujahs of exultant joy! But soon we are down, again, in the deeps and strike a minor key. Grace, alone, can raise us! Nature, alas, sinks if left to itself!

26, 27. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His Glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. The best Book, with the best Teacher, descanting upon the best of Subjects! Everywhere this Book speaks about Christ—and when Christ explains it, He only brings Himself more clearly before our minds!

28. And they drew near unto the village, where they went. They were sorry to be nearing their destination. They would have liked to walk to the ends of the earth in such company and listening to such conversation!

28. And He made as though He would have gone further. Christ intended to go further unless the two disciples constrained Him to tarry with them.

29. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. That is our prayer to the Lord Jesus tonight, "Abide with us, dear Master! We had Your blessed company this morning and now the sun is almost down—abide with us!" Let each one of us pray the prayer that we often sing, for, morning, noon, and night, this is a suitable supplication—

"Abide with me from morn till eve, For without You I cannot live; Abide with me when night is nigh, For without You I dare not die."

29-31. And He went in to stay with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, He took bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. In the breaking of bread, Christ is often known. It is a wonderful emblem. Even if this breaking of bread were not the observance of the Lord's Supper, it was something very like it. Christ's blessing and breaking of bread anywhere are the true token of Himself.

31-33. And He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they

rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem. It was getting late, but it is never too late to tell of Christ's appearing, and never too early! Such a secret ought not to be kept an hour and, therefore, "they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem."

33-36. And found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread. And as they thus spoke, Jesus, Himself, stood in the midst of them. You see that, while they were talking about Christ, He came and stood in their midst! Speak of your Master and He will appear! Oh, happy people who have but to talk of Jesus, and lo, He comes to them! 37-40. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. They knew those signs, the marks of His Crucifixion. They ought to have been convinced at once that it was even He.

41. And while they yet believed not for joy. Does joy stop faith? Beloved, anything stops faith if we will let it! Faith is a Divine miracle. Wherever it exists, God creates it and God sustains it—but without God, anything can hinder it—"while they yet believed not for joy."

41. And wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? That is, "anything eatable."

42. And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish. Which, as fishermen, they were pretty sure always to have.

42. And of an honeycomb. As a second course, to complete the meal. 43. And He took it, and did eat before them. Some of the old versions

add, "and gave the rest to them," which I think is very likely to have been the case. It would be all the more convincing to them if He really ate before them, and then that they also partook of the same food of which He had taken part.

44, 45. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. Good Master, do the same with us tonight!

46, 47. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. This Gospel message was to be proclaimed among all nations, "beginning at Jerusalem," but not ending there! It has been preached to us—let us see to it that we pass it on to those who have never heard it.

48. And you are witnesses of these things. We also are called to be "witnesses of these things." May the Lord make us to be faithful and true witnesses, for His name's sake! Amen.

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Luke 24,47 #1729 - Beginning At Jerusalem

BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM

NO. 1729

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 14, 1883,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached

in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Luke 24:47.

The servants of God were not left to originate a Gospel for themselves, as certain modern teachers appear to do, nor were they even left to map out their mode of procedure in the spreading of the glad tidings. They were told by their great Master what to preach, where to preach it, how to preach it and even where to begin to preach it. There is ample room for the exercise of our thought in obeying Christ's commands, but the worldly wise in these days call no one a thoughtful person who is content to be a docile follower of Jesus. They call themselves "thoughtful and cultured" simply because they set up their own thoughts in opposition to the thoughts of God. It were well if they would remember the old proverb— "Let another praise you and not your own lips."

As a rule, those who call themselves, "intellectuals," are by no means persons of great intellect. Great minds seldom proclaim their own greatness! These boasters are not satisfied to be "followers of God, as dear children," but must strike out a path for themselves—this reveals their folly rather than their culture. We shall find use for every faculty which we possess, even if we are endowed with 10 talents, in doing just as we are bid to do by our Lord. Implicit obedience is not thoughtless—on the contrary, it is necessary to its completeness that heart and mind should be active in it.

I. You that would faithfully serve Christ note carefully how He taught His disciples WHAT THEY WERE TO PREACH. We find different descriptions of the subject of our preaching, but on this occasion it is comprised in two things—repentance and remission of sins. I am glad to find in this verse that old-fashioned virtue called repentance. It used to be preached, but is now out of fashion. Indeed, we are told that we always misunderstood the meaning of the word, "repentance"—it simply means a "change of mind" and nothing more. I wish that those who are so wise in their Greek knew a little more of that language, for then they would not be so ready with their infallible statements!

True, the word does signify a change of mind, but in its Scriptural connection it indicates a change of mind of an unusual character. It is not such a fitful thing as men mean when they speak of changing their minds, as some people do fifty times a day, but it is a change of mind of a deeper kind. Gospel repentance is a change of mind of the most radical sort— such a change as never was worked in any man except by the Spirit of God. We mean to teach repentance, the old-fashioned repentance, too! And I do not know a better description of it than the child's verse— "Repentance is to leave The things we loved before, And show that we in earnest grieve By doing so no more."

Let every man understand that he will never have remission of sin while he is in love with sin—and that if he lives in sin he cannot obtain the pardon of sin. There must be a hatred of sin, a loathing of it and a turning from it, or it is not blotted out.

We are to preach repentance as a duty. "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." He that has sinned is bound to repent of having sinned—it is the least that he can do. How can any man ask God for mercy while he lives in his sin? We are to preach the acceptableness of repentance. In itself considered, there is nothing in repentance deserving of the favor of God. But, the Lord Jesus Christ having come, we read, "He that confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy." God accepts repentance for the sake of His dear Son. He smiles upon the penitent sinner and puts away his iniquities. This we are to make known on all sides.

We are also to preach the motives of repentance—that men may not repent from mere fear of Hell, but they must repent of sin, itself. Every thief is sorry when he has to go to prison—every murderer is sorry when the noose is about his neck—the sinner must repent, not because of the punishment of sin—but because his sin is sin against a pardoning God, sin against a bleeding Savior, sin against a holy Law, sin against a tender Gospel. The true penitent repents of sin against God and he would do so even if there were no punishment. When he is forgiven, he repents of sin more than ever, for he sees more clearly than ever the wickedness of offending so gracious a God.

We are to preach repentance in its perpetuity. Repentance is not a Grace which is only to be exercised by us for a week or so at the beginning of our Christian career—it is to attend us all the way to Heaven. Faith and repentance are to be inseparable companions throughout our pilgrimage to Heaven. Repenting of our sin and trusting in the great Sin Bearer is to be the tenor of our lives and we are to preach to men that it must be so. We are to tell them of the source of repentance, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Repentance is a plant that never grows on nature's dunghill—the nature must be changed and repentance must be implanted by the Holy Spirit or it will never flourish in our hearts. We preach repentance as a fruit of the Spirit or else we greatly err.

Our second theme is to be remission of sins. What a blessed subject is this! To preach the full pardon of sin—that it is blotted out once and for all! To preach the free pardon of sin, that God forgives voluntarily of His own Grace—free forgiveness for the very chief of sinners for all their sins, however black they may be—is not this a grand subject? We are to preach a final and irreversible remission—not a pardon which is given and taken back again—so that a man may have his sins forgiven and yet be punished for them. I loathe such a Gospel as that and could not

preach it! It would come with an ill grace from these lips. But the pardon of God once given stands forever! If He has cast our sins into the depths of the sea, they will never be washed up. If He has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west, how can they return to condemn us? Once washed in the blood of the Lamb, we are clean! The deed is done! The one offering has put away, forever, all the guilt of Believers. Now this is what we are to preach—free, full, irreversible pardon for all that repent of sin and lay hold on Christ by faith. O servants of the Lord, be not ashamed to declare it, for this is your message!

II. Next to this, we are told WHERE IT IS TO BE PREACHED. The text says that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations. Here, then, we have the Divine warrant for missions. They are no speculations, or enthusiastic dreams—they are matters of Divine command. I daresay you have heard of what the Duke of Wellington said to a missionary in India who was questioning whether it was of any use to preach the Gospel to the Hindus. "What are your marching orders?" said this man of discipline and obedience. "What are your marching orders?" That is the deciding question! Now the marching orders are, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." What a wonder it is that the Church did not see this long before! After her first days she seems to have fallen asleep and it is scarcely a 100 years ago since, in the Providence and Grace of God, the Church began to awaken to her high enterprise. We are to preach the Gospel everywhere—missions are to be universal!

All nations need the preaching of the Word of God. The Gospel is a remedy for every human ill among all the races that live upon the face of the earth. Some out of all nations shall receive it, for there shall be gathered before the Eternal Throne men out of every kindred, nation and tongue. No nation will utterly refuse it—there will be found a remnant according to the Election of Grace even among the most perverse of the tribes of men! We ought to preach it to every creature, for it is written that it behooved Christ to be so. Read the 46th verse—"Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. . . and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations."

Brothers and Sisters, there was a Divine necessity that Christ should die—and an equally imperative must that He should arise again from the dead! But there is an equally absolute necessity that Jesus should be preached to every creature under Heaven. It behooves Him to be so. Who, then, will linger? Let us, each one, according to his ability and opportunity, tell to all around us the story of the forgiveness of sin through the Mediator's Sacrifice to as many as confess their sin and forsake it! We are bid to preach repentance of sin and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—let us not be slow to do so.

III. But this is not all. We are actually told HOW TO PREACH IT. Repentance and remission are to be preached in Christ's name. What does this mean? Ought we not to learn from this that we are to tell the Gospel to others because Christ orders us to do so? In Christ's name we must do it! Silence is sin when salvation is the theme. If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out against them. My Brothers, you must proclaim the Gospel according to your ability—it is not a thing which you may do or may not do at your own discretion. You must do it if you have any respect for your Savior's name. If you dare pray in that name; if you dare hope in that name; if you hear the music of joy in that name—then in the name of Jesus Christ preach the Gospel in every land!

But it means more than that. Not only preach it under His orders, but preach it on His authority. The true servant of Christ has His Master to back Him up! The Lord Jesus will seal by threats or by Grace, the Word of God preached by His faithful messengers. If we threaten the ungodly, the threat shall be fulfilled! If we announce God's promise to the penitent, that promise shall be surely kept! The Lord Jesus will not let the words of His own ambassadors fall to the ground. "Lo, I am with you always," He says, "even to the end of the world. Go you, therefore and teach all nations." You have Christ with you—teach the nations by His authority!

But does it not mean, also, that the repentance and the remission which are so bound together come to men by virtue of His name? Oh, Sinner, there would be no acceptance of your repentance if it were not for that dear name! Oh, guilty Conscience, there would be no ease for you through the remission of sin if it were not that the blessed name of Jesus is sweet to the Lord God of Hosts! We dare preach pardon to you in His name! The blood has been shed and sprinkled on the burning throne—the Christ has gone in within the veil and stands there, "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them." There is assuredly Salvation in His name and this is our glory—but—"there is none other name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved."

That name has a fullness of saving efficacy and if you will but rest in it, you shall find salvation, and find it now! Thus you see we are not bid to go forth and say—We preach you the Gospel in the name of our own reason. Or, we preach you the Gospel in the name of the Church to which we belong, or by the authority of a synod, or a bishop, or a creed, or a whole Church. No, we declare the Truth of God in the name of Christ! Christ has set His honor to guarantee the Truth of the Gospel. He will lose His glory if sinners that believe and repent are not saved! Dishonor will come to the Son of God if any man repenting of sin is not accepted before God!

For His name's sake, He will not cast away one that comes to Him. O chief of sinners! He will receive you if you will come! He cannot reject you—that were to be false to His own promise, untrue to His own Nature! Be sure, then, that you preach in Christ's name. If you preach in your own name, it is poor work. A man says to me, "I cannot tell a dead sinner to live. I cannot tell a blind sinner to see. I cannot invite an insensible sinner—it is absurd, for the sinner is altogether without strength." No, dear Sir, I do not suppose you can do so while you speak according to carnal reason. Does the good man say that God has not sent him to bid the dead arise? Then let him not do it! Pray let him not try to do what God never sent him to do! Let him go home and go to bed—he will probably do as much good, asleep, as awake! But as for me, I am sent to preach in Jesus' name, "Believe and live!" And, therefore, I am not slow to do so. I am sent on purpose to say, "You dry bones, live," and I dare not do otherwise! No faithful minister who knows what faith means looks to the sinner for power to believe, or looks to himself for power—he looks to the Master that sent him for power! And in the name of Christ he says to the withered hand, "Be stretched out!" And he says to the dead, "Come forth!" And he does not speak in vain. Oh, yes, it is in Christ's name that we fulfill our office! We are miracleworkers! He endows us with His power if in faith we proclaim His Gospel.

All of you who try to speak the Gospel may do it without fear of failure, for the power lies in the Gospel and in the Spirit who goes with it—not in the preacher or in the sinner. Blessed be the name of God, we have this treasure in earthen vessels but the excellency of the power is of God

and not of us! So He tells us, then, what to preach, where to preach it and how to preach it.

IV. Now, I shall ask your attention to the principal topic of the present discourse and that is, that He told His disciples WHERE TO BEGIN. I have heard of a Puritan who had, in his sermon, 45 Mal. divisions and about 10 subdivisions under every head. He might be said, largely, to divide the Word of Truth, even if he did not rightly divide it! Now, I have nine subheads, tonight, and yet I hope I shall not detain you beyond the usual time. I cannot make fewer of them and give the full meaning of this sentence—"Beginning at Jerusalem." The Apostles were not to pick and choose where they should start, but they were to begin at Jerusalem.

Why? First, because it was written in the Scriptures that they were to begin at Jerusalem—"Thus it is written, and thus it behooves, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." It was so written, but I will give you two or three proofs. Read in the second chapter of Isaiah, at the third verse— "Out of Zion shall come forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah's words would have fallen to the ground if the preaching had not begun at Jerusalem! But now, to the very letter, this prediction of the evangelical Prophet is kept. In Joel, that famous Joel who prophesied the descent of the Spirit and the speaking of the servants and the handmaidens, we read in the second chapter, at the 32nd verse, "In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance."

And again, in the 16th verse of the third chapter of the same Prophet— "The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem." As if the Lord were as a strong lion in the midst of Jerusalem! And as if the sounding forth of the Gospel was like the roaring of His voice, that the nations might hear and tremble! How could those promises have been kept if the Gospel had begun to be preached in the deserts of Arabia, or if the first Church of Christ had been set up at Damascus? Note another passage. Obadiah in his 21st verse says, "Saviors shall come up on mount Zion." Who were these saviors but those who instrumentally became so by proclaiming the Savior, Jesus Christ? And Zechariah, who is full of visions, but not visionary, says in his 14th chapter at the eighth verse, "Living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem." And then he describes the course of those waters till they flowed even unto the Dead Sea and made its waters sweet.

Because the Bible said so, therefore they must begin at Jerusalem! And I call your attention to this, for our Lord Jesus was particular that every jot and tittle of the Old Testament should be fulfilled. Do you not think that this gives us a lesson that we should be very reverent towards every sentence of both the Old and the New Testaments? And if there is anything taught by our Lord, ought not His people to consider well and act according to the Divine ordinance? I am afraid that many take their religion from their parents, or from the Church that is nearest to them without weighing it. "I counsel you to keep the King's commandment."

Oh, that we may be more faithful servants of the Lord! If we are faithful, we shall be careful upon what men call small points, such as the Doctrine of Baptism, the manner of the Lord's Supper, or this small point of where the Gospel should be first preached. It must begin at Jerusalem and nowhere else, for the Scripture cannot be broken. See you to it, then, that you walk according to the Word of God and that you test everything by it. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." So much on the first head.

Secondly, I suppose that our Lord bade His disciples begin to preach the Gospel at Jerusalem because it was at Jerusalem that the facts which make up the Gospel had occurred. It was there that Jesus Christ died; that He was buried; that He rose again and that He ascended into Heaven. All these things happened at Jerusalem, or not far from it. Therefore the witness-bearing of the Apostles must be upon the spot where, if they lie, they can be confuted—where persons can come forward and say, "It was not so! You are deceivers." If our Lord had said, "Do not say anything in Jerusalem. Go to Rome and begin preaching there," it would not have looked quite so straightforward as it now does when He says, "Preach this before the scribes and the priests. They know that it is so. They have bribed the soldiers to say otherwise, but they know that I have risen."

The disciples were to preach the Gospel in the streets of Jerusalem. There were people in that city who were once lame, who leaped like a hart when Jesus healed them! There were men and women there who ate of the fish and that bread that Jesus multiplied. There were people in Jerusalem who had seen their children and their friends healed of dreadful diseases. Jesus bids His disciples beard the lion in his den—and declare the Gospel on the spot where, if it had been untrue, it would have been contradicted with violence! Our Lord seemed to say, "Point to the very place where My death took place. Tell them that they crucified Me; and see if they dare deny it. Bring it home to their consciences that they rejected the Christ of God."

Therefore it was, that coming to the very people who had seen these things, the preaching of Peter had unusual force about it—in addition to the power of the Holy Spirit there was also this—that he was telling them of a crime which they had newly committed and could not deny! And when they saw their error they turned to God with penitent hearts. I like this thought—that they were to begin at Jerusalem because there the events of the Gospel occurred. This is a direction for you, dear Friend—if you have been newly converted, do not be ashamed to tell those who know you! A religion which will not stand the test of the fireside is not worth much! "Oh," says one, "I have never told my husband. I get out on a Thursday night, but he does not know where I am going and I sneak in here. I have never even told my children that I am a Believer. I do not like to let it be known. I am afraid that all my family would oppose me."

Oh, yes—you are going to Heaven round by the back lanes! Going to sneak into Glory as a rat crawls into a room through a hole in the floor! Do not attempt it! Never be ashamed of Christ! Come straight out and say to your friends, "You know what I was, but now I have become a disciple of Jesus Christ." Begin at Jerusalem—it was your Lord's command! He had nothing to be ashamed of. There was no falsehood in what He bade His disciples preach and, therefore, He did as good as say, "Hang up My Gospel to the light. It is nothing but the Truth of God, therefore display it before My enemies' eyes." If yours is a true, genuine, thorough conversion, I do not say that you are to go up and down the street crying out that you are converted—but on due occasions you must not hide your convictions. Conceal not what the Lord has done for you, but hold up your candle in your own house.

The third reason why the Lord Jesus told them to begin at Jerusalem may have been that He knew that there would come a time when some of His disciples would despise the Jews and, therefore, He said—When you preach My Gospel, begin with them. This is a standing commandment and everywhere we ought to preach the Gospel to the Jew as well as to the Gentile. Paul even says, "to the Jew first." Some seem to think that there ought to be no mission to the Jews—that there is

no hope of converting them—that they are of no use when they are converted, and so on. I have even heard some who call themselves Christians speak slightingly of the Jewish people. What? And your Lord and Master a Jew? There is no race on earth so exalted as they are! They are the seed of Abraham, God's Friend. We have nobles and dukes in England, but how far could they trace their pedigree? Why, up to a nobody!

But the poorest Jew on earth is descended linearly from Jacob, Isaac and Abraham. Instead of treating them with anything like disrespect, the Savior says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Just as we say, "Ladies first," so it is, "the Jew first." They take precedence among races and are to be waited on first at the Gospel feast. Jesus would have us entertain a deep regard to that nation which God chose of old and out of which Christ came, for He is of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. He puts those first who knew Him first. Let us never sneer again at a Jew, for our Lord teaches us the rule of His house when He says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Let the seed of Israel first have the Gospel presented to them and if they reject it we shall be clear of their blood. But we shall not be faithful to our orders unless we have taken note of Jews as well as Gentiles.

The fourth reason for beginning at Jerusalem is a practical lesson for you. Begin where you are tempted not to begin. Naturally these disciples would have said, one to another, when they met, "We cannot do much here in Jerusalem. The first night that we met together the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. It is of no use for us to go out into the street; these people are all in such an excited frame of mind that they will not receive us! We had better go up to Damascus, or take a long journey and then commence preaching. And when this excitement is cooled down and they have forgotten about the Crucifixion, we will come and introduce Christ gradually and say as little as we can about putting Him to death."

That would have been the rule of policy—that rule which often governs men who ought to be led by faith. But our Lord had said, "Begin at Jerusalem," and so Peter must stand up in the midst of that motley throng and he must tell them, "This Jesus whom you have, with wicked hands, crucified and slain is now risen from the dead." Instead of tearing Peter to pieces they come crowding up, crying, "We believe in Jesus! Let us be baptized into His sacred name." The same day there were added to the Church 3,000 souls and a day or two afterwards, 5,000 were converted by the same kind of preaching! We ought always to try to do good where we think that it will not succeed! If we have a very strong aversion as a token that we are not called to it, we may regard it as a sign that we ought at least to try it.

The devil knows you, dear Friend, better than you know yourself. You see, he has been longer in the world than you have and he knows a great deal more about human nature than you do. And so he comes to you and he sizes you up pretty accurately and says, "This man would be very useful in a certain sphere of labor, so I must keep him from it." So he tells the Brother that he is not called to it and that it is not the sort of thing for him—and so on—and then he says to himself, "I have turned aside one foe from harming my cause." Yonder is a good Sister. Oh, how much she might do for Christ, but Satan guides her into a work in which she will never shine, while the holy work which she could do right well, she dreads.

I heard a beautiful story last Wednesday, when I was sitting to see inquirers, and I cannot help mentioning it here, for it may be a suggestion to some Christian who is present. A Brother, who will be received into the Church, was converted in the following way. He came up to London and

worked in a certain parish in the West End. He was at work on a sewer and a lady from one of the best houses in the West End came to the men that were making the sewer and said, "You men, come into my servants' hall and eat your dinners. I will give you either tea or coffee with your meal and then you will not have to go into the public house." Some of them went in, but others did not. So the next day the lady came out, and said, "Now, I know that you think my place too fine for you. You do not like to come. So I have come out to fetch you in. While this sewer is being done I should like you to eat your dinners in my house."

She got them all in and when they had done their dinners and drank their tea or coffee she began to talk to them about Jesus Christ. The work was a month or so about and it was every day the same. Our friend does not know the lady's name, but he knows the name of Jesus through her teaching. Friends, we lose hosts of opportunities, I am sure we do! Many ways of doing good have never occurred to our minds, but they ought to— and when they do occur we should use them! Let us crucify the flesh about this. Let us overcome natural timidity. Let us, in some way or other, begin at Jerusalem, which is just where we thought that we never could begin.

Now fifthly. We are getting on, you see. "Beginning at Jerusalem," must surely mean begin at home. Jerusalem was the capital city of their own country. You know the old proverb, "The cobbler's wife goes barefoot." I am afraid that this proverb is verified by some Christians. They do a deal of good five miles from home, but none at home. I knew a man who used to go out with preachers every night in the week and try to preach, himself, poor soul that he was. But his children were so neglected that they were the most wicked children in the street—and they grew up in all manner of vice. The father was prancing about and looking after other people—and did not care for his own family! Now, if you are going to serve Christ to the very ends of the earth, take care that you begin at home!

Dear parents, need I urge you to look to your own children? It is a great joy to me to know that the members of this Church, for the most part, do this. When a dear Sister came to me on Wednesday night with three of her children, making four that had come within the last six weeks, I felt grateful to God that parents were looking after their offspring. But if any of you are in the Sunday school and never have a Sunday school at home—if any of you talk to strangers in the aisles, but are neglecting your own sons and daughters—oh, let it not be so! The power of a father's prayers, with his arms about his boy's neck, I know full well! The power of a mother's prayers, with her children all kneeling round her, is far greater with the young than any public ministry will be. Look well to your children!

Begin at Jerusalem. Begin with your servants. Do not let a servant live in your house in ignorance of the Gospel. Do not have family prayer merely as a matter of form, but let it be a reality! Do not have one person working for you to whom you have never spoken about his or her soul. Begin with your brothers! Oh, the influence of sisters over brothers! I have a friend—a dear friend, too—who has long been a man of God, but in his young days he was a very loose fellow. Often he was all the night away from home. His sister used to write letters to him and frequently, while half tipsy, he read them under street lamps. One letter which he read cut him to the quick. His sister's grief about him was too much for him and he was compelled to seek and find the Savior. Well has the sister been rewarded for all her love to him!

Oh, dear Friends, begin at Jerusalem! Begin with your brothers and sisters! Begin with your neighbors! Oh, this London of ours! It is a horrible place for Christian people to live in! Round about this neighborhood scarcely can a decent person remain by reason of the vice that abounds and the language that is heard on every side. Many of you are as much vexed today as Lot was when he was in Sodom. Well, bear your witness! Do not be dumb dogs, but speak up for your Lord and Master wherever you are! Look at our dear Brother, Lazenby, who entered a workshop where none feared the Lord and has been the means of bringing all in the shop to God! Another shop has felt his influence and the first recruit has come to join the Church—I should not wonder if the whole of the workmen in the second shop should come, too! The Lord grant it. It is marvelous how the Gospel spreads when men are in earnest and their lives are right. God make you to live so that you show piety at home!

Then, sixthly, begin where much has already been done. Begin at Jerusalem. It is hard work, dear Friends, to preach to certain people—they have been preached to so long, like the people at Jerusalem. They know all about the Gospel! It is hard to tell them anything fresh and yet they have felt nothing, but remain wed to their sins. The Jerusalem people had been taught in vain for centuries! And yet Christ's disciples were to speak to them first. We must not pass the Gospel-hardened—we must labor for the conversion of those who have enjoyed privileges but have neglected them—those who have had impressions and have crushed them out! We must not ignore those who seem as if they had sealed their own death warrants and will never be saved.

Do not hesitate to go to them! The Lord has already done much—it may be that He has laid the fire and you are to strike the match and set it all alight. Many people have a love to the Gospel, a love to the House of God, a love to God's people and yet they have no saving faith. What a pity! Do not hesitate to address them. I think I hear you say, "I would rather go and preach to the outcasts." So would I, but you and I are not allowed to pick our work. Virgin soil yields the best harvest and if a man might choose a congregation that is likely to be fruitful, he might well select those that have never heard the Word of God. But we have no choice. The Savior's disciples were to begin where the Prophets had prophesied and had been put to death—where sinners had rejected God's voice times out of mind! Therefore do not pass by your fellow seat holders.

Perhaps you say, "Sir, I have spoken to them a great many times, but I cannot make anything of them." No, you cannot, but God can! Try again. Suppose that for 20 years you were to sit in this Tabernacle side by side with an unconverted person and you were to speak to that person twice every Sunday and twice in the week—and all the 20 years it should be in vain? Yet if, at last, the individual were brought to Christ, would not his conversion repay you? Is your time so very precious? Is your ability so very great? Oh, my dear Friend, if you were an archangel, it would be worth while for you to work a thousand years to bring one soul to Christ! A soul is such a precious jewel that you would be abundantly rewarded if a century of service only brought you one conversion! Why, in working for Christ, do not hesitate to go to those who have refused the Gospel up to now, for you may yet prevail.

Seventh, begin where the Gospel day is short. If you ask me where I get that thought, it is from the fact that within a very short time Jerusalem was to be destroyed. The Romans were to come there to slay men, women and children! They were to break down the walls and leave not one stone upon another. And Christ's disciples knew this—that is why their Lord said, "Begin at Jerusalem."

Now, then, if you have any choice as to the person you shall speak to, select an old man. He is near his journey's end and if he is unsaved, there is but a little bit of candle left by the light of which he may come to Christ. Choose the old man and do not let him reMal. ignorant of the Gospel. Fish him up at once, for with him it is now or never, since he is on the borders of the grave. Or when any of you notice a girl upon whose cheek you see that hectic flush which marks consumption—if you notice during service the deep "churchyard" cough—say to yourself, "I will not let you go without speaking to you, for you may soon be dead." How many a time have I seen a consumptive at Mentone apparently getting better—but I have noticed him rise from dinner with his handkerchief to his mouth and soon they have whispered, "He died of hemorrhage"—suddenly taken off. When you meet with a pining case, do not wait to be introduced, but introduce yourself. And tenderly, gently, quietly, lovingly say a word about coming to Christ at once. We ought to speedily look up those whose day of Grace is short. Perhaps, also, there is a stranger near you who is going far away to a distant land and may never hear the Gospel again. Therefore, if you have an opportunity, take care that you avail yourself of it and reason with him for Jesus at once. Begin at Jerusalem—begin where the day of Grace is short.

Eighthly, begin, dear Friend, where you may expect opposition. That is a strange thing, perhaps, to advise, but I recommend it because the Savior advised it. It was as certain as that two times two is four that if they preached Christ in Jerusalem, there would be a noise, for there were persons living there who hated the very name of Jesus—they had conspired to put Him to death! If they began at Jerusalem, they would awaken a ferocious opposition. But nothing is much better for the Gospel than opposition! A man comes into the Tabernacle tonight and, as he goes away, he says, "Yes, I was pleased and satisfied." In that man's case I have failed! But another man keeps biting his tongue, for he cannot endure the preaching. He is very angry—something in the doctrine does not suit him and he cries, "As long as I live I will never come here again." That man is hopeful! He begins to think!

The hook has taken hold of him. Give us time and we will have that fish! It is no ill omen when a man gets angry with the Gospel. It is bad enough, but it is infinitely better than that horrible lethargy into which men fall when they do not think. Some are not good enough, even, to oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Be hopeful of the man who will not let you speak to him—he is one that you must approach again. And if he does let you speak to him and he seems as if he would spit on you, be grateful for it! He feels your words. You are touching him on a sore place. You will have him yet! When he swears that he does not believe a word of what you say, do not believe a word of what he says—for often the man who openly objects, secretly believes. Just as boys whistle when they go through a churchyard in order to keep their courage up, so many a blasphemer is profane in order to silence his conscience. When he feels the hook, like the fish, the man will dart away from it. Give him line. Let him go. The hook will hold and, in due time, you will have him, by God's Grace. Do not despair! Do not think it a horrible thing that he should oppose you—you should rather be grateful for it and go to God and cry that He will give you that soul for your hire! Begin courageously where you may expect opposition.

And, lastly, to come to the meaning which Mr. John Bunyan has put upon the text in his famous book called, "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved," I have no doubt that the Savior bade them begin at Jerusalem because the biggest sinners lived there. There they lived who had crucified Him! The loving Jesus bids them preach repentance and remission to them. There he lived who had pierced

the Savior's side and they that had plaited the crown of thorns and put it on His head! There dwell those who had mocked Him and spat upon Him—and, therefore, the loving Jesus, who so freely forgives, says, "Go and preach the Gospel to them first." The greatest sinners are the objects of the greatest mercy! Preach first to them.

Are there any such here? My dear Friend, we must first preach the Gospel to you because you need it the most. You are dying! Your wounds are bleeding! The heavenly Surgeon bids us staunch your wounds first. Others who are not so badly hurt may wait awhile, but you must be first served lest you die of your injuries. Should not this encourage you great sinners to come to Jesus when He bids us preach to you first? We are to preach to you first because when you have received Him, you will praise Him the most! If you are saved, you will encourage others to come and you will cheer up those who have already come! We shall be glad to get fresh blood poured into the veins of the Church by the conversion of big sinners who love much because they have had been much forgiven and, therefore, we are to come to you first. Will you not come to Christ at once? Oh, that you would believe in Him! Oh that you would believe in Him tonight! To you is the word of this salvation sent!

You old sinners—you that have added sin to sin and done all you can do with both hands wickedly—you that have cursed His name—you that have robbed others—you that have told lies—you that have blackened yourselves with every crime, come and welcome to Jesus! Come to Christ and live at once! Mercy's door is set wide open on purpose that the vilest of the vile may come—and they are called to come first! Just as you are, come along with you. Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but, now, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." This night if you believe in Jesus you shall go out of these doors rejoicing that the Lord has put away your sin! To believe is to trust—simply trust in Christ. It seems a very simple thing, but that is why it is so difficult. If it were a hard thing, you would more readily attend to it—but being so easy, you cannot believe that it is effectual. But it is! Faith saves! Christ needs nothing of you but that you accept what He freely presents to you! Put out an empty hand, a black hand, a trembling hand—accept what Jesus gives—and salvation is yours!

Thus have I tried to expound, "Beginning at Jerusalem," O that my Lord would begin with you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 28:1-20.

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Luke 24,47 #3224 - 'Repentance and Remission'

"REPENTANCE AND REMISSION"

NO. 3224

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 17, 1870.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name

among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Luke 24:47.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1729, Volume 29—

BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge,

athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS verse is among our Lord's last words to His disciples just before He left them to return to Heaven. He wished to impress upon them the Truth of God that it was His purpose and desire that their lives should be devoted to the preaching of His Gospel among all nations upon the face of the earth. In Christ's own words and throughout the New Testament, we find the greatest stress laid upon preaching. Preaching is the great battering ram that is to shake the gates of Hell! Preaching is God's chief method of winning souls unto Himself—"for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." We cannot too often remind this age in which we live of this Truth, for this is a time in which it is supposed that rites and ceremonies, human learning and literature and I know not what else, may very properly be allowed to supplant the preaching of the Word! Yet our Lord has given no intimation of any change in His purpose and plan—on the contrary, His great commission is evidently intended to cover the whole of this present dispensation—"Go you, therefore, and teach (that is, make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them (that is, those who have been made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (or, more properly, unto the end of the age). Amen." So, until this dispensation is brought to a close by the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, "repentance and remission of sins" are to "be preached in His name among all nations." Blessed, indeed, are those who, in this land or anywhere else, have heard their Lord and Master say to them as He said to His disciples

before He left them, "and you are witnesses of these things."

As I have been called, by His Grace, to be one of His witnesses, I will now try to put the text to practical use by preaching, first, upon the subject, and secondly, upon the audience here mentioned by our Lord. I. First, let us consider THE SUBJECT OF OUR PREACHING as here stated by our Lord—"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name."

So the first part of the subject is that repentance should he preached in the name of Jesus. There is a very important point that must here be noted—and that is that repentance is not to be preached in the name of Moses as a legal duty. Undoubtedly, it is a legal duty, for everyone who sins against God ought to repent of doing so. Whenever we have broken any Law of God, we ought to be sorry for having broken it. It is the natural, commonsense duty of the creature, when he has disobeyed any command of his Creator, to grieve that he has thus grossly offended his Maker and to resolve that if possible, he will not do so any more. But it is not in this fashion, simply as a legal duty, that Christ has bid His servants preach repentance. If we preach it thus, our labor will be in vain— at least to a very large extent!

Nor are we to preach it merely as a matter of faint hope. There is, indeed, more than a faint hope for any man who is bid to repent because he will suppose, naturally and properly, that the God who bids him repent must have some designs of love towards him. But we are not to preach to sinners in such a fashion as simply to make them faintly hope that they may be saved. You know that when Jonah passed through the streets of Nineveh, his mournful and monotonous message was, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." When that message was carried to the king, he laid aside his gorgeous robe and put on sackcloth, sat in ashes, proclaimed a fast for man and beast and commanded his people to turn from their evil ways! Yet he had no better hope than this— "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" When they repented, God did have mercy upon them and spared them. But we have to carry to sinners a far more hopeful message than that heathen king's enquiry, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent?" Our Lord Jesus Christ has ordained that repentance should be preached in quite a different fashion than that!

We are not even to preach it after the manner of John the Baptist who preached repentance as a preparation for the coming of Christ. His message was, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." To the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, he said, "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance," evidences of a change of life, because there was One far mightier than he coming after him—whose shoes he was not worthy to bear. John was only sent to prepare the way for Him who should baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. There are some, nowadays, who seem to think that repentance is a sort of preparation for faith in Christ, but that is not as we understand the Word of God—as we will try to show you before we have finished our discourse. We have not to preach repentance after the manner or in the nature of Moses, or Jonah, or John the Baptist—we have to preach repentance in the name of Jesus Christ! What does this mean? First, it means that we are to preach repentance as the gift of God. Christ was exalted with His Father's right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, "to give repentance" as well as "forgiveness of sins." Wherever there is real sorrow for sin, wherever there is an honest determination, by God's Grace, to cease from sin, wherever there is a complete change of mind with regard to sin—for that is what repentance means—that repentance has been produced by the Spirit of God and it is as

much a gift of the Covenant of Grace as even the pardon which comes with it is! This is the repentance which we are to preach in Christ's name, and of which Joseph Hart so sweetly sings—

"Come, you needy, come and welcome, God's free bounty glorify! True belief and true repentance, Every Grace that brings us near, Without money, Come to Jesus Christ and buy!"

You are not to seek to draw up repentance from the depths of your own heart, as you might draw up water from a well, but to ask Christ to work repentance in you by His Holy Spirit, through belief of the Truth of God as it is recorded in the Word of God, or as it is set before you in the preaching of the Gospel. As you learn how terribly Christ suffered because of sin, that Truth will, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, be the means of leading you to hate sin. And you will realize how the Holy Spirit, by enlightening the understanding and influencing the affections, produces repentance even in that sterile heart which had never been previously softened and made fertile by the gentle dew and rain of Grace. So we are to tell sinners that God gives repentance—that it is one of the free gifts of His Grace—and that whoever has it may rest assured that the hand of the Lord has been upon him for good and that, in fact, the work of salvation has been already begun in his soul!

Further, to preach repentance in the name of Jesus also means that wherever there is real repentance, it is the token of the pardon of sin—not merely a hopeful sign, but the sure and Infallible sign of pardon. If any man's heart is turned away from sin. If he prostrates himself in the dust before God because of his offenses. If he looks with true penitence to Christ upon the Cross, crying, "Lord, remember me," "Lord, save me," "God be merciful to me, a sinner"—it is not a question whether forgiveness may or may not be granted to him—it is a fact that he is already forgiven! David's words are still true, "The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit." It was for such as these that Jesus suffered upon Calvary. So let the message ring out through every land beneath the canopy of Heaven, that wherever there is a soul that loathes sin and leaves sin, Eternal Mercy has already commenced its gracious work and that soul is forgiven!

I also think that to preach repentance in the name of Jesus means that we are to preach it on the authority of Jesus. We are not merely to bid men repent and to try to persuade them to do so by various reasons

Volume 56 3that might be urged! We are to take far higher ground than that, as Paul did at Athens when he said, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent." The servants of Christ are not to preach repentance on their own authority, or even on the authority of the Church of Christ, but they are to preach it on the authority of the Church's ascended Head! This was Christ's own message, for we read, "After that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the Gospel." So no true minister of Christ need be either afraid or ashamed to tell sinners—even the very worst sinners—that they should repent! When Jesus went into the country of the Gadarenes, a man possessed by an unclean spirit met Him—a wild man whom no mere human being could tame, a man who snapped the fetters and chains with which he was bound, a man who lived in the mountains, or among the tombs, a man who was a terror to the whole countryside and from whom all who could, fled—did Jesus flee from him or pass him by as too bad to be cured? No, the fiat of Omnipotence was, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." And though it was not merely one

demon, but a whole legion of evil spirits that possessed the man, they all departed at Christ's command! And the man, himself, was shortly afterwards found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind." And soon he, too, was taken into Christ's service, "and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel." In like manner, the true minister of Christ is not only to call upon the most moral and the most hopeful to repent, but he is to give the same message to the most immoral and the most hopeless! On the day of the Pentecost, when Peter had charged his hearers with putting Jesus to death, they were pricked in their heart and said to the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." You know what followed—about three thousand of them gladly received Peter's words, were baptized and the same day were added to the Church! Our commission to preach the Gospel to every creature was issued by Him to whom all power in Heaven and in earth had been given! It is, therefore, under Divine authority that "repentance and remission of sins" are to be preached in Christ's name among all nations! "Repentance and remission" are so joined together that wherever we find the one, we are sure to find the other. Where there is no repentance, there can be no remission. But where there is true repentance—that godly sorrow for sin that needs not to be repented of— there is the full and free forgiveness of all sins of the one who has thus sincerely repented!

According to our text, this remission of sins is to be preached in the name of Jesus. We have the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ for declaring that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." And when Paul was preaching at Antioch concerning the Resurrection of Christ, he put this Truth of God very plainly—"Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses." We also are to preach, not as unauthorized persons who hope that what we say may possibly prove to be true, but as those who are proclaiming Divine Truths and certainties on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! As one of the Lords witnesses, let me tell you, my dear Hearers, that there is promised to penitents a full pardon of every sin they have ever committed, whether it has been a sin of thought, or word, or deed— whether it has been a sin of omission or of commission! This pardon makes a clean sweep of the accumulated heaps of defilement that have resulted from years of iniquity! It is a pardon as great as it is full—pardon for the most horrible and oft-repeated offenses, pardon for uncleanness, for theft, for blasphemy, even for murder if the murderer has truly repented! It is a—

"Pardon for crimes of deepest dye, A pardon bought with Jesus' blood."

The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin, all who truly repent and believe in Him! It cleanses from the sins that banish men from the presence of their fellows, and from the sins that would banish them forever from the Presence of the thrice-holy God! Yes, pardon is to be proclaimed in the name of Jesus for sins such as these—they are not too black to be forgiven by God—they are not too deeply ingrained to be washed out by the precious blood of Jesus!

And this great and full pardon is also a pardon that is given instantaneously. In a moment the guilt of the penitent sinner is forgiven! To quote Hart, again, "His pardon at once he receives." The instant that faith is begotten in the soul, we are justified in the sight of God and we can say with the

Apostle Paul, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." The believing penitent turns his weeping eyes to Christ upon the Cross, gazes with mingled sorrow and joy upon the blood that flowed from His many wounds, places all his reliance upon the God-appointed Propitiation, "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and in that very moment all his iniquities are gone forever! The Lord has blotted them out and driven them away like clouds that have been dispersed by a tornado, and that can never be found again!

This pardon is realized by the penitent sinner who receives it. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Oftentimes, the sense of pardon comes upon a man like a piece of good news that makes him almost leap for joy—he was never before thrilled with so wondrous an emotion! He is half inclined to sing—

"He has lifted me out of the miry clay, And set my feet on the King's Highway"—

but, perhaps, instead of doing so, he bows himself before the Lord in solemn silence, feeling that he could never express the gratitude he feels for

Volume 56 5such amazing mercy. Or, possibly, he finds David's words just suited to his experience and, therefore, he says, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits who forgives all your iniquities." He realizes, as David did, that all his iniquities are forgiven and with the royal Psalmist he sings, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Nor is this all, for this pardon is one that is never reversed. O Sinner, if you really repent of your sin and believe in Jesus, the sinner's Savior, you are saved with an everlasting salvation! Remember that you have to deal with a God who never changes—He gives to the guilty penitent full and free forgiveness, not a reprieve or a respite! Once washed in the precious blood of Jesus, you shall never go back to your sin so as to live in it, and to die in it and perish. If you are truly trusting in Jesus, you are saved, not merely for today, tomorrow and next week, but forever. What says the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Were you, my dear Hearer, ever pardoned by God for Christ's sake? Then you are pardoned forever! But if not, I pray that you may repent and believe the Gospel this very hour.

Perhaps you say, "But all this seems so strange to me. You tell me that my sins can all be forgiven in a moment, and forgiven forever—and that I have nothing to pay for this priceless blessing, but am simply bid to repent of my sin and believe in Jesus." Yes, that is all true. But I do not ask you to believe it because I say it, for I only repeat to you the message that I have received from the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, through His Word and by His Spirit. He cannot lie—and it is He who says, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." He has given the best proof possible that your sins can be forgiven in the fact that He died in the place of sinners. Jesus Christ, who was God as well as Man, suffered as the Substitute of all who believe in Him. He bore their sins in His own body up to the tree and away from the tree! And now, for all who truly trust Him, there is no condemnation forever!

"But," says one, "I do not doubt that repentance and remission of sins are to be preached in Christ's name. My difficulty is as to whether they are for me!" Well, that is a point that you must settle under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Have you really repented of your sin? Have you

sorrowed over it as the great curse of your life? Have you hated it and turned away from it, and sought to live as the holy God would have you live? Well, then, if the repentance is yours, the remission, also, is yours— for they go together in Christ's own words—"repentance and remission of sins." To hate sin because it slew Christ. To hate sin because God is so good that we ought not to sin against Him. To hate sin because God is so gracious as to forgive it. To weep over sin, not like a child who has done wrong, and so keeps away from his father, but like a penitent child who lays his head in his father's bosom and sobs out his grief there, and mourns that he has offended such a loving father who is so ready to forgive him—this is evangelical repentance and wherever it is found, there is also the remission of sins! If you do not know experimentally what it is thus to repent, breathe the prayer, "O Lord, show me the guilt of my sin. Teach me to mourn over it, to loath it and leave it. Let me see Your dear Son bearing its penalty on my behalf and then assure me, by Your Spirit's gracious instructions, that my sins, which were many, are all forgiven for Jesus' sake, that so I may go on my way rejoicing as a sinner saved by Sovereign Grace."

Those of you who were here last Sabbath morning [See Sermon #925, Volume

16—INDIVIDUAL SIN LAID ON JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] will remember that my text was, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And you will also recollect that I tried to describe various characters to whom that verse applies. I hope God gave comfort and blessing to some who listened to the sermon here. But oh, it was a joy to me to hear of one far away in Scotland who had been for years desponding and despairing who was led to find rest and peace through reading the printed sermon! But why should not many more of you be blessed while hearing the Word of God as so many are in reading it? Poor captive Soul, why should you not be set at liberty? Arise and shake yourself from the dust, for in Christ's name pardon is preached unto you if you will but repent of your sins and trust Him to save you from them!

II. Now, secondly, we are to think of THE AUDIENCE THAT IS TO BE ADDRESSED UPON THIS SUBJECT—"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Why is this Gospel to be preached among all nations? Well, first, because all nations need it! And then, because the Gospel is exactly suited to all nations. And further, because God has a chosen number in all nations who will receive the Word and be saved by it. And also because it shall be a witness against those in all nations who hear it but refuse to heed it.

Some nations were learned, yet when Paul was addressing the Greeks who were proud of their philosophy and were continually seeking after wisdom, he preached repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name—the same A B C Doctrine of Jesus Christ and Him crucified that he proclaimed wherever he went! And the greatest scholars of the present day, if they would be wise unto salvation, must stoop to learn the same Gospel alphabet! No, rather they will be elevated as they acquire these elements and rudiments of heavenly knowledge and become scholars in Christ's School of Grace!

Other nations were very ignorant. In the Apostles' days there were some parts of the earth where the people were rude barbarians without any knowledge of books and letters. Yet the Apostles

went to them and

Volume 56 7preached repentance and remission of sins—and the Gospel was simple enough for them to understand—and many of the heathen turned from their idols to serve the living God! And in later days, many of the greatest triumphs of the Truth of God have been won among the savages and untutored tribes of Africa, India and North America—and the islands of the southern seas. Ignorant and degraded as they were, many of them have become new creatures in Jesus Christ, living here to the praise and glory of God and, in due time, going to join the ranks of the blessed above!

There are nations that worship God after a very imperfect fashion, although they know not Jesus Christ, whom He has sent to be the Savior of sinners. To these, also, we must preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name, for no man can come unto the Father except by Jesus Christ, His Son! Men cannot know God until they see the brightness of His Glory revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ. To theists and polytheists, those who believe in one God and those who worship "gods many and lords many," we have but one message, even that which our Lord Himself delivered, "Repent you, and believe the Gospel." And already, many of them, by Divine Grace, have repented and received the remission of their sins in Christ's name!

There are three very important words at the end of our text— "beginning at Jerusalem." John Bunyan has a masterly treatise upon this text, entitled The Jerusalem sinner saved; or, good news for the vilest of men: being a help for despairing souls, showing that Jesus Christ would have mercy in the first place offered to the biggest sinners. Those of you who have his works will find the whole treatise well worth reading, but I am going to borrow some of his divisions and speak upon them after my own fashion.

Bunyan's first reason why Christ would have mercy proclaimed first to the biggest sinners is "because the biggest sinners have most need thereof." A surgeon who is caring for the wounded on a battlefield and who has several soldiers awaiting his attention, will be anxious, first, to attend to the man who is the most seriously hurt and whose life seems fast ebbing away. He will leave for a while the one who has only a slight scratch or cut on his flesh, and devote all his thought and care to the man who is so terribly maimed and lacerated that it is a marvel how he manages to live at all! He will have him put in the ambulance and taken at once to the field hospital, that his life may be saved if it is possible. And oh, if among my hearers there are some great offenders—some who have sinned very terribly, some who have sinned against God and man, against their own bodies and souls, some who may be truly called, "Jerusalem sinners, the vilest of men"—I want to assure them, first, that my Master has sent me to preach especially to them and to tell them that if they repent of their sins—many and great as they have been—they shall all be forgiven!

Bunyan's second reason why Christ would have mercy preached first to the biggest sinners is "because when they, any of them, receive it, it redounds most to the fame of His name." If a doctor cures someone's finger that is only slightly injured, he may get the credit of it, yet no one will say much about it. But if there is a person who is suffering from a disease that is believed to be incurable and a wise physician is the means of his restoration to health, how the whole neighborhood will ring with his praises! When someone else is very ill, friends will say, "You should send for Dr. So-and-So. You know what he did for that other poor man, perhaps he could do as much for you." And when the Lord Jesus Christ saves some black blasphemer or some leader in

vice and iniquity, how fast the news flies throughout the whole region where he lives! Why, even among the lowest of the low, when one of their companions is converted, you know how they talk about it! They cry, "Have you heard what's happened to old Jack?" "No. What is it?" "Why, you know that he used to go along with us, first in all manner of evil—and now he has become a Christian!" That is sure to be repeated among all his old connections and so Christ gets fame and honor through His great work of Grace and, therefore, it is that He would have the biggest sinners specially bid to repent and believe the Gospel.

Bunyan's third reason is "because, by their forgiveness and salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to Him for life." When sinners hear that some big black sinner has been forgiven by Christ, they naturally ask, "Then why should not we be forgiven?" A rebel city is besieged and the king threatens to hang every traitor when he captures it. They do all they can to strengthen their defenses and to beat off the besiegers, resolved never to yield. But when one of their greatest captains is captured and the king, instead of hanging him, sends him back to the city loaded with gifts and bids him tell his fellow rebels that if they will only open the gates, he will forgive them and he will give them a royal charter for their city, and will be the patron of all their industries, what do they do? Why, Sirs, they fling wide the gates! They ring the bells and they beg the king to enter at once and accept their loyal homage! You can easily apply the parable to your own case. I pray that many of you may do so right now.

The time flies so fast that I cannot take Bunyan's lessons in detail. His next one is that when the biggest sinners are saved, they weaken Satan's kingdom the most. Catch the ringleaders and you can soon break up the band. Often one man can twist quite a number round his fingers and make them do as he pleases. When he is converted, he brings his mates to hear the preacher whose word was blessed to him—and thus many are won to Christ and Satan's ranks are thinned!

Besides, how it strengthens the Church when great sinners are converted! It was a great day for the Churches of England when John Bunyan was saved. It was a glorious day for the Apostolic Churches when Saul the persecutor became Paul the preacher! And this will be a grand night for the Tabernacle Church if the Lord will turn some great sinner here from the error of his ways and enlist him beneath the banner of the Cross! This is the kind of man who will lead the forlorn to hope in Christ,

Volume 56 9and plant the victorious banner of the Gospel on heights of sin that seem inaccessible to ordinary Christians! Great sinners, when they are converted, are the men to do great exploits in the name of Jesus!

Further, where great sinners are forgiven, it is a clear proof that the Gospel has power to bless other sinners. When the elephants entered the ark, all the beasts outside could see that the door was wide enough to admit them. As God's Grace saved the chief of sinners, that Grace can save you, my Friend, however great a sinner you have been! There may have come in here tonight, as they often do, those who are not usually found in places of worship. My Brother or my Sister, for as such I regard you, sinner as you are, I have to tell you that if you will repent of your sin and trust in Jesus as your Savior, you shall go out of this house justified, even as the publican went out of the Temple of old after he had, from the depths of his soul cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Thus have I tried to preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name to the Jerusalem sinners, the very worst men and women here! But I must not close without also preaching in the same fashion to you who think you are not the worst sinners here. O you respectable sinners, you moral and amiable sinners! You also need a Savior! Though you would stand by yourselves and say, "God, we thank You that we are not as other men and as other women are," yet Christ's message to you is, "You must be born-again." You, too, need to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus! Therefore, in His name, I preach to you "repentance and remission of sins," just as I have done to the greatest sinners here. May the ever-blessed Spirit come to you and take away your pride and your self-righteousness, and bring you down where you must come—just as publicans and harlots must come—to the pierced feet of Him who loves sinners, receives sinners and saves sinners—and who will receive you and save you if you will but trust Him! God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Acts 2:36-47.

You know that Peter had been preaching a plain, simple, straightforward sermon upon the death, Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who was once such a coward that he trembled before a little maid, now that he is filled with the Spirit, boldly charges this crowd with being murderers and Deicides because their kind put to death the Lord of Life and Glory! If you turn to the 36th verse, you will see the effect of Peter's plain preaching through the power of the Holy Spirit—

36, 37. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart [See Sermon

#2102, Volume 35—"PRICKED IN THEIR HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] A little later in this same Book, we read of those who listened to Stephen's sharp, sword-like sentences, "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart"—and soon they stoned Stephen to death! To be "cut to the heart" is not enough! But to be pricked in the heart is to receive a mortal wound! Happy is the man who has had his sin killed through having received a deadly wound from the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! These people who heard Peter preach "were pricked in their heart" and, first, they were in doubt as to what they should do, but secondly, they were resolved that whatever they were told to do they would do at once.

37, 38. And said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nobody but a Baptist minister could have preached that sermon! At least we shall have to wait a long while before we hear any other saying to a whole congregation, "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you." This is, indeed, the full proclamation of the Gospel—and we have no more right to leave out the Baptism than we have to leave out the repentance! "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you." Peter was not like those hyper-Calvinists who are afraid to give an exhortation to a sinner because he is spiritually dead! He spoke out boldly to those who had asked, "What shall we do?" and said to them,

"Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

39. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. [See Sermon #2586, Volume

44—A FAR-REACHING PROMISE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] This is a most blessed verse. The promise is to us

and to our descendants—not merely to our children, but also to our grandchildren. Yes, and to our race as far as it yet may run! And the next clause, "and to all that are afar off" proves that the promise is made to the far-off ones as well as to our children, with only this limitation, "even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

40. And with many other works did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Not, "save yourselves from Hell"—that Christ, alone, can do for you, but "save yourselves from this generation" by coming boldly out from among the ungodly, taking upon you the distinctive mark of the Christian and so separating yourselves from those upon whom the sentence of death shall fall.

41-45. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's Doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need. What a notable instance this was of the power of Divine Grace! We would not usually suppose that the Jewish race would be given to any excess of making common property—but where Grace came in the first flush of its dawn,

Volume 56 11 see to what prodigies of liberality it excited the early Believers! Would that we had more of this generous spirit nowadays!

46. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. I believe that wherever two or three disciples of Christ meet together it is competent for them to celebrate the Lord's Supper. That ordinance is not, as some think it to be, a Church ordinance, to be confined to the official assembling of all Believers—but wherever two or three are met in Christ's name, there He is—and where He is, there may the emblems of His broken body and shed blood be partaken of in memory of Him!

47. Praising God, and having favor with all His people. And the lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved. [See Sermon #1167, Volume

20—ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH——Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Luke 24,47 #329 - Christ's First and Last Subject

CHRIST'S FIRST AND LAST SUBJECT

NO. 329

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1860,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent,

for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4:17.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in

His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Luke 24:47.

IT SEEMS from these two texts that repentance was the first subject upon which the Redeemer dwelt and that it was the last which, with His departing breath, He commended to the earnestness of His disciples. He begins His mission crying, "Repent." He ends it by saying to His successors the Apostles, "Preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

This seems to me to be a very interesting fact and not simply interesting but instructive. Jesus Christ opens His commission by preaching repentance. What then? Did He not by this act teach us how important repentance was—so important that the very first time He opens His mouth, He begins with, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand"? Did He not feel that repentance was necessary to be preached before He preached faith in Himself because the soul must first repent of sin before it will seek a Savior, or even care to know whether there is a Savior at all?

And did He not also indicate to us that as repentance was the opening lesson of the Divine teaching, so, if we would be His disciples we must begin by sitting on the stool of repentance before we can possibly go upward to the higher forms of faith and of full assurance? Jesus at the first begins with repentance—that repentance may be the Alpha, the first letter of the spiritual alphabet which all Believers must learn. And when He concluded His Divine commission with repentance, what did He say to us but this—that repentance was still of the very last importance?

He preaches it with His first, He will utter it with His last breath. With this He begins, with this He will conclude. He knew that repentance was, to spiritual life, a sort of Alpha and Omega—it was the duty of the beginning, it was the duty of the end. He seemed to say to us, "Repentance, which I

preached to you three years ago when I first came into the world as a public Teacher, is today still as binding and as necessary for you who heard Me then and who then obeyed My voice, as it was at the very first instant. And it is equally needful that you who have been with Me from the beginning should not imagine that the theme is exhausted and out of date—you, too, must begin your ministry and conclude it with the same exhortation, 'Repent and be converted, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' "

It seems to me that nothing could set forth Jesus Christ's idea of the high value of repentance more fully and effectually than the fact that He begins with it and that He concludes with it. That He should say, "Repent," as the keynote of His ministry, preaching this duty before He fully develops all the mystery of godliness and that He should close His life-song as a good composer must, with His first keynote, bidding His disciples still cry, "Repentance and remission of sins are preached in Jesus' name," I feel, then, that I need no further apology for introducing to your solemn and serious attention the subject of saving repentance. And oh, while we are talking of it, may God the Holy Spirit breathe into all our spirits and may we now repent before Him and now find those blessings which He has promised to the penitent.

With regard to repentance, these four things—first, its origin. Secondly, its essentials. Thirdly, its companions. And fourthly, its excellencies.

I. Repentance—ITS ORIGIN. When we cry, "Repent and be converted," there are some foolish men who call us legal. Now we beg to state, at the opening of this first point, that repentance is of Gospel parentage. It was not born near Mount Sinai. It never was brought forth anywhere but upon Mount Zion. Of course repentance is a duty—a natural duty—because when man has sinned, who is there brazen enough to say that it is not man's bounden duty to repent of having done so? It is a duty which even nature itself would teach.

But Gospel repentance was never yet produced as a matter of duty. It was never brought forth in the soul by demands of Law, nor indeed, can the Law except as the instrument in the hand of God's Grace, even assist the soul towards saving repentance. It is a remarkable fact that the Law itself makes no provision for repentance. It says, "This do and you shall live; break My command and you shall die." There is nothing said about penitence. There is no offer of pardon made to those that repent.

The Law pronounces its deadly curse upon the man that sins but once—and offers no way of escape—no door by which the man may be restored to favor. The barren sides of Sinai have no soil in which to nourish the lovely plant of penitence. Upon Sinai the dew of mercy never fell. Its lightning and its thunder have frightened away the angel of Mercy once and for all and there Justice sits, with sword of flame, upon its majestic throne of rugged rock, never purposing for a moment to put up its sword into the scabbard and to forgive the offender.

Read attentively the twentieth chapter of Exodus. You have the Commandments there all thundered forth with trumpet voice and there is no pause between where Mercy with her silver voice may step in and say, "But if you break this Law, God will have mercy upon you and will show Himself gracious if you repent." No words of repentance, I say, were ever proclaimed by the Law—no promise by it made to penitents. And no assistance is by the Law ever offered to those who desire to be forgiven. Repentance is a Gospel grace. Christ preached it, but not Moses.

Moses neither can nor will assist a soul to repent. Only Jesus can use the Law as a means of conviction and an argument for repentance. Jesus gives pardon to those who seek it with weeping and with tears. But Moses knows of no such thing. If repentance is ever obtained by the poor sinner it must be found at the foot of the Cross and not where the Ten Commandments lie shivered at Sinai's base.

And as repentance is of Gospel parentage, I make a second remark—it is also of gracious origin. Repentance was never yet produced in any man's heart apart from the Grace of God. As soon may you expect the leopard to regret the blood with which its fangs are moistened—as soon might you expect the lion of the wood to abjure his cruel tyranny over the feeble beasts of the plain—as expect the sinner to make any confession or offer any repentance that shall be accepted of God unless God's Grace shall first renew the heart. Go and loose the bands of everlasting winter in the frozen north with your own feeble breath and then hope to make tears of penitence bedew the cheek of the hardened sinner.

Go and divide the earth and pierce its heart with an infant's finger and then hope that your eloquent appeal, unassisted by Divine Grace, shall be able to penetrate the adamantine heart of man. Man can sin and he can continue in it, but to leave the hateful element is a work for which he needs a Divine power. As the river rushes downward with increasing fury, leaping from crag to crag in ponderous cataracts of power, so is the sinner in his sin—onward and downward—onward yet more swiftly, more mightily, more irresistibly, in his hellish course.

Nothing but Divine Grace can bid that cataract leap upward or make the floods retrace the pathway which they have worn for themselves down the rocks. Nothing, I say, but the power which made the world and dug the foundations of the great deep can ever make the heart of man a fountain of life from which the floods of repentance may gush forth. So then, Soul, if you shall ever repent it must be a repentance not of nature, but of grace.

Nature can imitate repentance. It can produce remorse. It can generate the feeble resolve. It can even lead to a partial, practical reform. But unaided Nature cannot touch the vitals and create new the soul. Nature may make the eyes weep but it cannot make the heart bleed. Nature can bid you amend your ways but it cannot renew your heart. No, you must look upward, Sinner. You must look upward to Him who is able to save unto the uttermost. You must at His hands receive the meek and tender spirit. From His fingers must come the touch that shall dissolve the rock. And from His eyes must dart the flash of love and light that can scatter the darkness of your impenitence.

Remember, then, at the outset—true repentance is of Gospel origin and is not the work of the Law. And on the other hand, it is of gracious origin and is not the work of the creature.

II. But to pass forward from this first point to our second head, let us notice the ESSENTIALS of true repentance. The old Divines adopted various methods of explaining penitence. Some of them said it was a precious medicine compounded of six things. But in looking over their divisions I have felt that I might with equal success divide repentance into four different ingredients. This precious box of ointment which must be broken over the Savior's head before the sweet perfume of peace can ever be smelt in the soul—this precious ointment is compounded of four most rare, most costly things.

God gives them to us and then gives us the compound itself mixed by the Master's hand. True repentance consists of illumination, humiliation, detestation and transformation.

To take them one by one. The first part of true repentance consists of illumination. Man by nature is impenitent because he does not know himself to be guilty. There are many acts which he commits in which he sees no sin. Even in great and egregious faults he often knows that he is not right but he does not perceive the depth, the horrible enormity of the sin which is involved in them. Eye-salve is one of the first medicines which the Lord uses with the soul. Jesus touches the eyes of the understanding and the man becomes as guilty in his own sight as he always was in the sight of God.

Crimes long forgotten start up from the grave where his forgetfulness had buried them. Sins which he thought were not sins suddenly rise up in their true character. Acts which he thought were perfect now discover themselves to have been so mixed with evil motive that they were far from being acceptable with God. The eye is no more blind and therefore the heart is no more proud for the seeing eye will make a humble heart. If I must paint a picture of penitence in this first stage I should portray a man with his eyes bandaged walking through a path infested with the most venomous vipers—vipers which have formed a horrible girdle about his loins and are hanging like bracelets from his wrists.

The man is so blind that he knows not where he is, nor what it is which he fancies to be a jeweled belt upon his arm. I would, then, in the picture touch his eyes and bid him see his horror and his astonishment when he discovers where he is and what he is. He looks behind him and he sees through what broods of vipers he has walked. He looks before him and he sees how thickly his future path is strewed with these venomous beasts. He looks about him and in his living bosom looking out from his guilty heart he sees the head of a vile serpent which has twisted its coils into his very vitals.

I would try, if I could, to throw into that face horror, dismay, dread and sorrow—a longing to escape, an anxious desire to get rid of all these things which must destroy him unless he should escape from them. And now, my dear Hearers, have you ever been the subject of this Divine illumination? Has God, who said to an unformed world, "Let there be light"—has He said, "Let there be light" in your poor benighted soul? Have you learned that your best deeds have been vile and that as for your sinful acts they are ten thousand times more wicked than ever you believed them to be? I will not believe that you have ever repented unless you have first received Divine illumination. I cannot expect a blind eye to see the filth upon a black hand. Nor can I ever believe that the understanding which has never been enlightened can detect the sin which has stained your daily life.

Next to illumination comes humiliation. The soul having seen itself, bows before God, strips itself of all its vain boasting and lays itself flat on its face before the Throne of Mercy. It could talk proudly once of merit but now it dares not pronounce the word. Once it could boast itself before God, with, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." But now it stands in the distance and smites upon its breast, crying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

Now the haughty eye, the proud look which God abhors, are cast away and the eye, instead thereof, becomes a channel of tears—its floods are perpetual, it mourns, it weeps and the soul

cries out both day and night before God for it is vexed with itself—because it has vexed the Holy Spirit and is grieved within itself because it has grieved the Most High.

Here, if I had to depict penitence, I should borrow the picture of the men of Calais before our conquering king. There they kneel with ropes about their necks, clad in garments of sackcloth and ashes cast about their heads—confessing that they deserve to die. But stretching out their hands they implore mercy. And one who seems the personification of the angel of mercy—or rather, of Christ Jesus, the God of mercy—stands pleading with the king to spare their lives.

Sinner, you have never repented unless that rope has been about your neck after a spiritual fashion. If you have not felt that Hell is your just desert and that if God banish you forever from Himself to the place where hope and peace can never come, He has only done with you what you have richly earned. If you have not felt that the flames of Hell are the ripe harvest which your sins have sown, you have never repented at all.

We must acknowledge the justice of the penalty as well as the guilt of the sin or else it is but a mock repentance which we pretend to possess. Down on your face, Sinner, down on your face! Put away your ornaments from you that He may know what to do with you. No more anoint your head and wash your face but fast and bow your head and mourn. You have made Heaven mourn, you have made earth sad, you have dug Hell for yourself. Confess your iniquity with shame and with confusion of face. Bow down before the God of mercy and acknowledge that if He spares you it will be His free mercy that shall do it—but if He destroys you, you shall not have one word to say against the justice of the solemn sentence.

Such a stripping does the Holy Spirit give when He works this repentance, that men sometimes under it sink so low as even to long for death in order to escape from the burden which soul-humiliation has cast upon them. I do not desire that you should have that terror but I do pray that you may have no boasting left, that you may stop your mouth and feel that if now the judgment hour were set and the Judgment Day were come you must stand speechless, even though God should say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell." Without this I say there is no genuine evangelical repentance.

The third ingredient is detestation. The soul must go a step further than mere sorrow. It must come to hate sin, to hate the very shadow of it, to hate the house where once sin and it were companions, to hate the bed of pleasure and all its glittering tapestries—yes, to hate the very garments spotted with the flesh. There is no repentance where a man can talk lightly of sin, much less where he can speak tenderly and lovingly of it. When sin comes to you delicately, like Agag, saying, "Surely the bitterness of death is past," if you have true repentance it will rise like Samuel and hew your Agag in pieces before the Lord.

As long as you harbor one idol in your heart, God will never dwell there. You must break not only the images of wood and of stone but of silver and of gold. Yes, the golden calf itself, which has been your chief idol must be ground into powder and mingled in the bitter water of penitence and you must be made to drink it. There is such a loathing of sin in the soul of the true penitent that he cannot bear its name. If you were to compel him to enter its palaces he would be wretched. A penitent cannot bear himself in the house of the profane. He feels as if the house must fall upon him.

In the assembly of the wicked he would be like a dove in the midst of ravenous kites. As well may the sheep lick blood with the wolf as well may the dove be comrade at the vulture's feast of carrion as a penitent sinner revel in sin. Through infirmity he may slide into it, but through grace he will rise out of it and abhor even his clothes in which he has fallen into the ditch (Job 9:31). The sinner unrepentant, like the sow wallows in the mire. The penitent sinner like the swallow may sometimes dip his wings in the limpid pool of iniquity but he is aloft again, twittering forth with the chattering of the swallow most pitiful words of penitence for he grieves that he should have so debased himself and sinned against his God.

My Hearer, if you do not so hate your sins as to be ready to give them all up—if you are not willing now to hang them on Haman's gallows a hundred and twenty cubits high—if you can not shake them off from you as Paul did the viper from his hand and shake it into the fire with detestation—then I say you know not the Grace of God in truth. For if you love sin you love neither God nor yourself, but you choose your own damnation. You are in friendship with death and in league with Hell. God deliver you from this wretched state of heart and bring you to detest your sin.

There lacks one more ingredient. We have had illumination, humiliation and detestation. There must be another thing, namely, a thorough transformation, for—

"Repentance is to leave The sins we loved before, And show that we in earnest grieve By doing so no more."

The penitent man reforms his outward life. The reform is not partial, but in heart. It is universal and complete. Infirmity may mar it, but grace will always be striving against human infirmity and the man will hate and abandon every false way. Tell me not, deceptive Tradesman, that you have repented of your sin while lying placards are still upon your goods. Tell me not, you who were once a drunkard, that you have turned to God while yet the cup is dear to you and you can still wallow in it by excess. Come not to me and say I have repented, you avaricious wretch, while you are yet grinding your almost cent, per cent, out of some helpless tradesman whom you have taken like a spider in your net.

Come not to me and say you are forgiven, when you still harbor revenge and malice against your brother and speak against your own mother's son. You lie to your own confusion. Your face is as the whore's forehead that is brazen, if you dare to say, "I have repented," when your arms are up to the elbow in the filth of your iniquity. No, Man, God will not forgive your lusts while you are still reveling in the bed of your uncleanness. And do you imagine He will forgive your drunken feasts while you are still sitting at the glutton's table? Shall He forgive your profanity when your tongue is still quivering with an oath?

Do you think that God shall forgive your daily transgressions when you repeat them again and again and again, willfully plunging into the mire? He will wash you, Man, but He will not wash you for the sake of permitting you to plunge in again and defile yourself once more.

"Well," do I hear you say, "I do feel that such a change as that has taken place in me." I am glad to hear it, my dear Sir. But I must ask you a further question. Divine transformation is not merely in act but in the very soul. The new man not only does not sin as he used to do, but he does not want to sin as he used to do. The flesh-pots of Egypt sometimes send up a sweet smell in his nostrils

and when he passes by another man's house where the leek and garlic and onion are steaming in the air, he half wishes to go back again to his Egyptian bondage. But in a moment, by God's grace, he checks himself, saying, "No, no. The heavenly manna is better than this. The water out of the Rock is sweeter than the waters of the Nile and I cannot return to my old slavery under my old tyrant."

There may be insinuations of Satan but his soul rejects them and agonizes to cast them out. His very heart longs to be free from every sin and if he could be perfect he would. There is not one sin he would spare. If you want to give him pleasure you need not ask him to go to your haunt of debauchery. It would be the greatest pain to him you could imagine. It is not only his customs and manners but his nature that is changed. You have not put new leaves on the tree but there is a new root to it. It is not merely new branches but there is a new trunk altogether and new sap and there will be new fruit as the result of this newness.

A glorious transformation is worked by a gracious God. His penitence has become so real and so complete that the man is not the man he used to be. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus. If you are renewed by grace and were to meet your old self, I am sure you would be very anxious to get out of his company. "No," you say, "no, Sir, I cannot accompany you." "Why, you used to swear!" "I cannot now." "Well, but," says he, "you and I are very near companions." "Yes, I know we are and I wish we were not. You are a deal of trouble to me every day. I wish I could be rid of you forever."

"But," says Old Self, "you used to drink very well." "Yes, I know it. I know you did, indeed, Old Self. You could sing a song as merrily as anyone. You were ringleader in all sorts of vice, but I am no relation of yours now. You are of the old Adam and I of the new Adam. You are of your old father, the devil. But I have another—my Father, who is in Heaven."

I tell you, Brethren, there is no man in the world you will hate so much as your old self. And there will be nothing you will so much long to get rid of as that old man who once was dragging you down to Hell. And he will try his hand at it over and over again every day you live and will accomplish it yet unless that Divine Grace which has made you a new man shall keep you a new man even to the end.

Good Rowland Hill, in his "Village Dialogues," gives the Christian whom he describes in the first part of the book, the name of Thomas Newman. Ah, and every man who goes to Heaven must have the name of New-man. We must not expect to enter there unless we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. I have thus, as best I could, feeling many and very sad distractions in my own mind, endeavored to explain the essentials of true repentance—illumination, humiliation, detestation, transformation. The endings of the words, though they are long words may commend them to your attention and assist you to retain them.

III. And now, with all brevity, let me notice, in the third place, the COMPANIONS of true repentance.

Her first companion is Faith. There was a question once asked by the old Puritan Divines—Which was first in the soul, Faith or Repentance? Some said that a man could not truly repent of sin until he believed in God and had some sense of a Savior's love. Others said a man could not have faith till he had repented of sin. For he must hate sin before he could trust Christ.

So a good old minister who was present made the following remark: "Brethren," said he, "I don't think you can ever settle this question. It would be something like asking whether, when an infant is born, the circulation of the blood or the beating of the pulse can be first observed." Said he, "It seems to me that faith and repentance are simultaneous. They come at the same moment. There could be no true repentance without faith. There never was yet true faith without sincere repentance."

We endorse that opinion. I believe they are like the Siamese twins. They are born together and they could not live asunder but must die if you attempt to separate them. Faith always walks side by side with his weeping sister, true Repentance. They are born in the same house at the same hour and they will live in the same heart every day. And on your dying bed, while you will have faith on the one hand to draw the curtain of the next world, you will have repentance—with its tears—as it lets fall the curtain upon the world from which you are departing.

You will have at the last moment to weep over your own sins and yet you shall see through that tear the place where tears are washed away. Some say there is no faith in Heaven. Perhaps there is not. If there is none then there will be no repentance. But if there is faith there will be repentance, for where faith lives, repentance must live with it. They are so united, so married and allied together that they never can be parted in time or in eternity. Have you, then, faith in Jesus? Does your soul look up and trust yourself in His hands? If so, then have you the repentance that needs not to be repented of.

There is another sweet thing which always goes with repentance just as Aaron went with Moses, to be spokesman for him. You must know that Moses was slow of speech and so is repentance. Repentance has fine eyes, but stammering lips. In fact it usually happens that repentance speaks through her eyes and cannot speak with her lips at all, except her friend— who is a good spokesman—is near. He is called, Mr. Confession.

This man is noted for his openness. He knows something of himself and he tells all that he knows before the Throne of God. Confession keeps back no secrets. Repentance sighs over the sin—confession tells it out. Repentance feels the sin to be heavy within—confession plucks it forth and indicts it before the Throne of God. Repentance is the soul in travail— confession delivers it. My heart is ready to burst and there is a fire in my bones through repentance—confession gives the heavenly fire a vent and my soul flames upward before God.

Repentance, alone, has groans which cannot be uttered—confession is the voice which expresses the groans. Now then, have you made confession of your sin—not to man, but to God? If you have, then believe that your repentance comes from Him and it is a godly sorrow that needs not to be repented of. Holiness is evermore the bosom friend of penitence. Fair angel, clad in pure white linen—she loves good company and will never stay in a heart where repentance is a stranger. Repentance must dig the foundations but holiness shall erect the structure and bring forth the top-stone. Repentance is the clearing away of the rubbish of the past temple of sin—holiness builds the new temple which the Lord our God shall inherit. Repentance and desires after holiness never can be separated.

Yet once more—wherever repentance is there comes also with it peace. As Jesus walked upon the waters of Galilee and said, "Peace, be still," so peace walks over the waters of repentance and

brings quiet and calm into the soul. If you would shake the thirst of your soul, repentance must be the cup out of which you shall drink and then sweet peace shall be the blessed effect. Sin is such a troublesome companion that it will always give you the heartache till you have turned it out by repentance and then your heart shall rest and be still.

Sin is the rough wind that tears through the forest and sways every branch of the trees to and fro. But after penitence has come into the soul the wind is hushed and all is still and the birds sing in the branches of the trees which just now creaked in the storm. Repentance ever yields sweet peace to the man who is the possessor of it.

And now what are you doing say, my Hearer—to put each point personally to you—have you had peace with God? If not, never rest till you have had it and never believe yourself to be saved till you feel yourself to be reconciled. Be not content with the mere profession of the head, but ask that the peace of God which passes all understanding may keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

IV. And now I come to my fourth and last point, namely, the EXCELLENCIES of repentance.

I shall somewhat surprise you, perhaps, if I say that one of the excellencies of repentance lies in its pleasantness. "Oh," you say, "but it is bitter!" No, say I, it is sweet. It may be bitter when it is alone, like the waters of Marah. But there is a tree called the Cross which if you can put into it, it will be sweet and you will love to drink of it. At a school of mutes who were both deaf and dumb the teacher put the following question to her pupils—"What is the sweetest emotion?" As soon as the children comprehended the question, they took their slates and wrote their answers.

One girl in a moment wrote down "Joy." As soon as the teacher saw it, she expected that all would write the same. But another girl, more thoughtful, put her hand to her brow and she wrote "Hope." Verily, the girl was not far from the mark. But the next one, when she brought up her slate, had written "Gratitude" and this child was not wrong. Another one, when she brought up her slate, had written "Love" and I am sure she was right. But there was one other who had written in large characters— and as she brought up her slate the tear was in her eye, showing she had written what she felt—"Repentance is the sweetest emotion." And I think she was right.

Verily, in my own case, after that long drought, perhaps longer than Elisha's three years in which the heavens poured forth no rain, when I saw but one tear of penitence coming from my hard, hard soul—it was such a joy! There have been times when you know you have done wrong but when you could cry over it you have felt happy. As one weeps for his first-born, so have you wept over your sin and in that very weeping you have had your peace and your joy restored. I am a living witness that repentance is exceeding sweet when mixed with Divine hope but repentance without hope is Hell.

It is Hell to grieve for sin with the pangs of bitter remorse and yet to know that pardon can never come and mercy never be vouchsafed. Repentance, with the Cross before its eyes, is Heaven itself—if not Heaven it is so next door to it, that standing on the tear-wet threshold I may see within the pearly portals and sing the song of the angels who rejoice within. Repentance, then, has this excellency—it is very sweet to the soul which is made to lie beneath its shadow. Besides this excellency, it is specially sweet to God as well as to men. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." When St. Augustine lay dying, he had this verse always fixed upon the

curtains so that as often as he awoke, he might read it—"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." When you despise yourselves, God honors you. But as long as you honor yourselves, God despises you. A whole heart is a scentless thing. But when it is broken and bruised it is like that precious spice which was burned as holy incense in the ancient tabernacle.

When the blood of Jesus is sprinkled on them, even the songs of the angels and the vials full of sweet odors that smoke before the Throne of the Most High are not more agreeable to God than the sighs and groans and tears of the brokenhearted soul. So, then, if you would be pleasing with God, come before Him with many and many a tear—

"To humble souls and broken hearts God with His grace is ever near. Pardon and hope His love imparts, When men in deep contrition lie. He numbers their tears, He counts their groans, His Son redeems their souls from death. His Spirit heals their broken bones, They in His praise employ their breath."

John Bunyan, in His "Siege of Mansoul," when the defeated townsmen were seeking pardon, names Mr. Wet-Eyes as the intercessor with the king. Mr. Wet-Eyes—good Saxon word! I hope we know Mr. Wet-Eyes and have had him many times in our house, for if he cannot intercede with God, yet Mr. Wet-eyes is a great friend with the Lord Jesus Christ and Christ will undertake his case and then we shall prevail. So have I set forth, then, a few of the excellencies of repentance.

And now, my dear Hearers, have you repented of sin? Oh, impenitent Soul, if you do not weep now, you will have to weep forever! The heart that is not broken now must be broken forever upon the wheel of Divine vengeance. You must now repent or else forever smart for it. Turn or burn—it is the Bible's only alternative. If you repent, the gate of mercy stands wide open.

May the Spirit of God bring you on your knees in self-abasement. Christ's Cross stands before you and He who bled upon it bids you look at Him. Oh, Sinner, obey the Divine bidding! But if your heart is hard like that of the stubborn Jews in the days of Moses, take heed lest—

"The Lord in vengeance dressed, Shall lift His head and swear— You that despised My promised rest, Shall have no portion there."

At any rate, Sinner, if you will not repent there is one here who will and that is myself. I repent that I could not preach to you with more earnestness this morning and throw my whole soul more thoroughly into my pleading with you. The Lord God, whom I serve, is my constant witness that there is nothing I desire so much as to see your hearts broken on account of sin. And nothing has gladdened my heart so much as the many instances lately vouchsafed of the wonders God is doing in this place.

There have been men who have stepped into this Hall who had never entered a place of worship for a score of years and here the Lord has met with them. And I believe if I could speak the word, there are hundreds who would stand up now and say, "It was here the Lord met with me. I was the chief of sinners. The hammer struck my heart and broke it and now it has been bound up again by the finger of Divine mercy and I tell it unto sinners and tell it to this assembled congregation there have been depths of mercy found that have been deeper than the depths of my iniquity."

This day there will be a soul delivered. This morning there will be, I do not doubt, despite my weakness, a display of the energy of God and the power of the Spirit. Some drunkard shall be

turned from the error of his ways. Some soul, who was trembling on the very jaws of Hell shall look to Him who is the sinner's hope and find peace and pardon—yes, at this very hour. So be it, O Lord and Yours shall be the glory, world without end. Amen.

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

Chapter 57

Luke 24,50-53 #2949 - Our Lord's Posture in Ascens

OUR LORD'S POSTURE IN ASCENSION

NO. 2949

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands,

and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He

was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they

worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

Luke 24:50-53.

[This sermon was originally titled "Our Lord's Attitude in Ascension."]

OUR Lord Jesus, having spoiled the grave and so proved His power over things that are under the earth, tarried for 40 days among men and so claimed His power over the earth, itself, and then ascended through the air to show that the dominion of the Prince of the power of the air was broken and, finally, entered into the Heaven of Heavens to claim sovereignty there, so that, from the lowest depths up to the extreme heights, He might take possession of His vast domains. I like to think of Him as traversing His dominions from end to end, like a conqueror looking over the provinces which have been subdued by his might. Our Lord did not make a rapid passage through the world. He might have gone, on the Resurrection morning, straight from the grave, as soon as it was opened, into His Glory but He had reasons for tarrying a while, and of those reasons I will briefly speak before I come to the main theme of my discourse—our Lord's posture in Ascension.

His Ascension occurred 40 days after He had risen from the dead. You know what a significant period 40 days has always been in Scripture and you know that in our Lord's own case, He was 40 days in the wilderness tempted of the devil, so that it was seemly for Him to tarry here for 40 days of triumph on the scene of His first great battle and victory. Whatever instruction there may be in these 40 days, I will not attempt to give any fanciful exposition of the meaning of them, but it is quite clear that they were sufficient for certain excellent purposes.

They were sufficient to prove to all mankind that He had truly risen from the dead, not as a phantom, but in real flesh and blood. He made many appearance to His disciples in different ways and in divers places. It was not possible that 500 brethren at once could all be deceived! And if that could be imagined, it is not likely that when, by twos and threes, and even as separate individuals, they had the most intimate communion with Him, they could have been mistaken! It was essential, in the highest degree, that the fact of His Resurrection should be certified beyond all question—and it now remains the best ascertained fact in all history. We may doubt a great many things that are recorded by historians, but we cannot doubt the fact of Christ's appearance after His Resurrection because it was not done in a corner, it was not done merely on one occasion, but before so many witnesses and in so many different places! The 40 days was a sufficient period for our Savior to be here to make it clear to all ages that He had really risen from the dead!

Besides that, I have no doubt He timed His sojourn on earth so that He might remove every lingering doubt from the minds of His disciples. Thomas had to be talked to and to be told to put his finger into the print of the nails and to thrust his hand into his Lord's side. And there were others beside Thomas who had many doubts. In fact, these was not one of the disciples without some doubt or other, so their Master had to act and speak in such a way that every one of them would be thoroughly assured as to His identity and as to the nature of His risen body. Thus He said to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Besides that, the instructions which Christ had previously given to His disciples needed a few finishing touches. Before His death, He had said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." But after He had risen from the dead, they could bear much more and there is no doubt that He made disclosures to them, then, which let further light into their souls. We read more than once of how He opened their understandings to receive the Scriptures and opened the Scriptures so that their understandings might grasp them!

But, chief of all, our Lord tarried here for 40 days that He might issue His commissions to His disciples. He said to one of them, "Feed My sheep" and, "Feed My lambs." And He said to all of them, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He would not take His final departure until His last orders were issued—till He had, as it were, marshaled His battalions, set them in their ranks, given them His commands and bid them march forward to battle and to victory. There was an Infinite Wisdom in the delay between the Resurrection and the Ascension and the more we think of it, the more we shall see that it was so. Thus much concerning the time of our Lord's sojourn here after He rose from the dead.

Further, the spot from which the Ascension took place is very instructive. Luke tells us, "He led them out as far as to Bethany." But, in the Acts of the Apostles, he informs us that this memorable scene took place upon "the mountain called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey." The two statements are not at all inconsistent with one another. I suppose that our Lord was upon that part of the Mount of Olives from which He could look down upon Bethany. To my mind, it is a very beautiful remark which is made by Van Oosterzee upon this incident. He says that when we stand in the place of our Lord's Ascension, we have three things—the Heaven above

us opened, for Christ passed through the golden gates. We have a happy home below, close at our feet, for there was Bethany, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus had their happy abode and none are so happy as those who are joined to the risen Christ! And then we have here a pathway, often trod by Christ's blessed feet, and along that pathway the disciples were to go back to Jerusalem—the very Jerusalem out of which He had led them for His Ascension. So that His Ascension from this position gives us three beautiful things—an opened Heaven, a happy home and a pathway consecrated and smoothed by His blessed feet.

The most significant circumstance, perhaps, about the place of His Ascension was that He went back to Heaven from the place where He had often communed with His disciples. He had opened up many mysteries to them there. It was there that they had sat and looked over at Jerusalem and He had spoken to them about the ultimate destruction of the guilty city. It was a place which was very dear to them and which must have brought many memories to our Savior's mind. There, just under the brow of the hill, were the olive trees of Gethsemane, and His eyes may have looked upon the spot where He wrestled for our sakes with all the powers of death and Hell. It is sweet to think that He ascended to His Glory from the place of His agony and bloody sweat. And, my Brothers and Sisters, we shall do the same in our measure. From the bed whereon we die we shall ascend into Glory and there we shall be transfigured and made like unto our Lord! And from the grave of death—our Gethsemane—our bodies shall leap at the coming of the Lord and the sounding of the great trumpet into all the resurrection beauty and life! Yes, where we fight, we shall conquer! Where we suffer, there we shall reign! I like to think of the last spot of earth that Jesus touched being a mountain—for mountains have often been the places where the grandest transactions of men with God have been performed—and to find Him going as near Heaven as He could upon His feet because He would not work a miracle as long as anything could be done by ordinary means. And then gently, as it were, pushing the earth downwards and Himself ascending into the Glory where He now sits at the right hand of God, even the Father!

Think over the time and the place of our Lord's Ascension and you will have some subjects worthy of your deepest meditation.

Then think of the scene itself. There are Christ's disciples gathered around Him— certainly the Apostles and, perhaps some more of His followers. They have come out to Bethany and Olivet from Jerusalem. I cannot tell whether they walked through the streets at mid-day, but I think it is very likely and if so, many must have stared wonderingly at

Volume 51 3the Nazarene, whom they had seen nailed to the Cross on Calvary, now alive again and passing through their streets. Whether it was so or not, I cannot tell. They crossed the Kedron, that gruesome brook in which the defilements of the Temple were taken away, and then they passed by Gethsemane, by the winding path till they came to the brow of Olivet where Jesus could look down, on the one side, on Jerusalem and, on the other side, on Bethany. And He began to talk with His disciples—what if I say that He began to sing His dying song? No, I must not say that, for He did not again die, but He sang His parting hymn and gave His farewell message.

And then He began to rise. How astonished His disciples must have been! How they must have shrunk back as the majesty flamed forth from Him! He began to rise and up He went—slowly, majestically rising and the disciples looking on till He must have grown smaller and smaller to their astonished vision! And when He was about to vanish from their sight, they saw a cloud float

between Himself and them and He was gone—gone to His Throne! I like to think of our Lord's Ascension in this simple but sublime manner. I might have been terrified if I had been Elisha walking with Elijah when the horses of fire and the chariots of fire came to take him away, but there was nothing terrible about this Ascension of Christ. He was not a Prophet of fire—He was gentle, meek, lowly and there was nothing to inspire terror in the way He ascended to Heaven. It is, to my mind, very beautiful to think of there being no medium employed in connection with His Ascension—no angels wings to bear Him upward—no visible arm of Omnipotence to lift Him gently from the earth—no eagle of Jupiter to steal away this choice and chosen One. No, but He rises by His own power and majesty! He needs no help.

Glad would the angels have been to came once more to earth as they had come at His birth, as they had come to the wilderness, as they had come to His tomb—gladly would they have ministered to Him! But He needed not their ministry, at least, in the beginning of His journey. He proved the innate power of His Deity by which He could depart out of the world just when He willed, breaking the law of gravity and suspending the laws usually governing matter. Well could He do this, for He made those laws and could alter or control them as He pleased. "A cloud received Him out of their sight," for I suppose they had then seen all that they ought to see and, perhaps, behind that cloud there were scenes of Glory which it was not possible for human eyes to gaze upon—and words which it was not lawful for human beings to hear. I do not know about that. I like the thought of our hymn writer concerning the angels, after the cloud had hidden Him from mortal view—

"They brought His chariot from above, To bear Him to His Throne— Clapped their triumphant wings and cried, 'The glorious work is done!'" There does seem to be some guide to us in that matchless 24th Psalm— "Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." It does read as if the warders at the top of the gate enquired, "Who is this King of Glory?" and that the attending angels replied, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Of these things we speak with bated breath, for we know not all that happened, then, but we do know that "a cloud received Him out of their sight."

The point upon which I want especially to dwell is this—what was the posture in which Christ was last seen by His disciples? I will read the words. "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven," so that the last posture in which Christ was seen was this—His hands were uplifted in the act of blessing His disciples! I am going to keep to that one thing—Jesus Christ's hands uplifted in blessing as He took His departure from this world. There is sometimes a good deal in the posture which one assumes. The actor, the orator and the preacher all know that there should be appropriate action in whatever we do. When Raphael represents Paul as standing with uplifted hands at Athens, preaching, he did it with good purpose. Perhaps the artist's skill has not always been observed, for what was Paul saying when he lifted up his hands—"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands"—and up went his hands at once! And I can very well understand Paul lifting up his hands before Agrippa when he said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds"—and the manacles rattled appropriately on his wrists!

We are not told much about the action with which our Lord Jesus Christ accompanied His speech. There is one thing recorded of Him in which it would be a great blessing if all ministers would imitate Him— "He opened His mouth and taught them, saying." We do not always know how He stood, but, on the occasion of His Ascension we know exactly what His posture was—"He lifted up His hands, and blessed them."

I. Observe, first, that HIS HANDS WERE UPLIFTED TO BLESS. This blessing was no unusual thing, for His hands were blessed hands

and nothing but blessing had ever come from them! What blessings thousands had received from those dear hands of His! Those hands had multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed the hungry thousands. Those hands had touched blind eyes and opened them. Those hands had been laid upon the leper and he was made whole. Those hands had touched the bier whereon the dead young man lay and he had been made to live again! Those blessed hands! Jesus continually went about doing good and His hands were always strewing blessings around Him—full as both

Volume 51 5of them were with rich treasure out of the storehouse of His heart of love. So, as He blessed His disciples as He was leaving them, He was only continuing to do what He had done ever since they had known Him! The richest blessing that you ever get from Christ is no new thing—it is just a continuation of His old habits and practices and if He were, at this moment, to lift His hands and give us some special blessing—as I pray that He may—it would only be another link in a long chain of which every link is more precious than the most valuable diamond in the world! He lifted His hands to bless His disciples because He had always been blessing them! And He will continue to bless us, Brothers and Sisters, because He has blessed us in the past and He changes not!

Christ blessed His disciples this time, however, in a different way, for He blessed them with a new authority. You know that the high priest came out after the Day of Atonement was over and all the sacrifices had been offered, and took off the white robes which he had worn in the early part of the day as a common priest. Those robes must have been all stained with blood, for the whole day he was occupied with the shedding and the sprinkling of the blood. And then the high priest put on his robe of glory and beauty, the garment of blue, and scarlet, and fine linen with its bells of sweetest sound, and its pomegranates and a glittering breastplate on his breast, and a miter on his head. And then he came out and gave to the people the blessing which could only be given when the Atonement was completed. And so, today, Jesus Christ blesses His people, not as the priest who is offering sacrifice, but as the One who has offered it! It is all finished and now, with authority, not as a pleader, but as One who has power to give, He blesses His people. He had invoked blessings upon them before—now He pronounces blessings upon them! He had looked up to Heaven for the blessing, but now, as it were, He looks down from Heaven and He, Himself, bestows the blessing, for He has it now in His own hands—

"All His work and warfare done"—

He is now going up to His Heaven and He proves His right to reign by beginning now the reign of benediction among the sons of men! If I may so say, He had before blessed His disciples as the preacher pronounces the benediction at the close of the service, but He blessed them now as He never had blessed them before—and in that sense it was the beginning of that golden discourse

from yonder consecrated pulpit at the right hand of God which He still continues to preach to us from this text, "Because I live, you shall live also."

Our Lord Jesus Christ's blessing, on that occasion, was, no doubt, a very full one. We are not told what He said. I am quite content not to know. I like to think that, possibly, He did not utter any words at all, but that He looked a blessing and, above all, bestowed a blessing with those blessed hands of His—not going up with His hands closed, as though they were full of something for Himself alone, but spread out, as if He would empty out of His hands the countless blessings which He had gasped for our sakes! "Look, My children," He says, "look! I am keeping nothing for Myself. All I have is for you. Hear, My disciples, hear! Whatever the Father has made known unto Me, I have made known unto you. Look, My children! Look, My Brethren! Behold, I have given you all that I have—My Manhood and My Godhead, My life, My death, My Resurrection and My Glory." And so, with those blessed hands uplifted, He seems to bestow the fullest conceivable blessing, for He gives us all that God can give! He gives us all that He has, to be ours forever and ever! Can you not picture Him doing this? He is before my mind's eye now. My imagination seems to help my faith and I bless His dear name that the last time His disciples saw Him, they saw Him with His hands emptied out upon them in blessing!

Note, also, that this blessing was for His disciples. May I not lay the emphasis there? "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." Yes, there are common blessings in which all men have a share, but there are special blessings for His chosen ones! He is universally benevolent, but He is especially generous to His own elect! He loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He has redeemed His people by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation. There was a specialty about Christ's benediction even as there was about His intercession. He said to His Father concerning His disciples, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me" and now that He had risen from the dead, He blessed them. May I hope that I am among the them, for on those disciples the blessing came that it might come on the whole Church of Christ of which they were the representatives? Has that blessing come on you, Beloved? Has God "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world"? Have we had the blessing of forgiveness, the blessing of justification, the blessing of adoption? Have we, today, the blessing of fellowship, the blessing of power to conquer sin? All these things the Lord gives to His own who know Him—to His sheep that hear His voice and that follow Him—and to whom He is, indeed, the Good Shepherd!

Then let me whisper in your ear—if He has blessed you, you shall be blessed, for there is no power in Heaven, or earth, or Hell that can reverse the blessing which He gives! If Jesus says it, you are indeed blessed! And He will say it again in the last tremendous day, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Notwithstanding all your trials and your troubles, your weaknesses and your infirmities, you are blessed— "blessed of the Lord that made Heaven and earth"—and you shall be blessed forever and ever, for He who has gone up on high, has left you the legacy of His blessing which shall never be taken away from you.

I look upon this blessing of the disciples by their ascending Lord as a fitting finish to the Savior's life—as if the Savior would say to them,

Volume 51 7"There, that is a summary of the whole of My life—I have lived to bless you. That is the sum total of My teaching, that is the grand end of My ministry, that is the sure result of My death—that I might bless you." That Resurrection blessing is the culmination of our Savior's life—that is the last stone put upon the pyramid of His mighty work! That blessing is the last and highest and best thing of all! Let us glory and rejoice in it. Who shall add anything to what Christ has finished? Luke closes his Gospel most appropriately with an, "Amen," and Amen it is. Verily, it shall be so. There are no curses to follow the Divine blessing. There shall be no terrors of wrath to follow that benediction of love. He has said it and it stands fast! Though Heaven and earth pass away, blessed shall His people be!

That is my first point, the posture of our ascending Lord. His hands were uplifted to bless.

II. Now, secondly, THOSE HANDS WERE PIERCED HANDS. Look! He is rising from the Mount of Olives. He has not gone high

enough yet for us to have quite lost sight of Him—my imagination is trying to picture the scene and I look, and say, "Yes, I know Him! I can still see the nail prints." As long as He is in sight, holding up His hands, you can see the distinguishing marks of the Lord Jesus—the emblems and tokens of the Crucified. You cannot mistake Him! Those are the hands that were nailed to the cruel wood of the Cross.

Those pierced hands, as we look up at them, are useful and comforting because, first, they let us know that they are really Christ's hands. 'Tis He that blesses us! By faith we are receiving blessing from Jesus Christ—not from someone else. But those hands do far more than that for us. They show us the price of the blessing which He has given to us. He is blessing us, but oh, how much those blessings cost Him! Unnumbered mercies flow down to us—

"Joys, like His griefs, immense, unknown"—

but He would not have us forget the griefs with which He bought our joys—

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

You are blessed, Brothers and Sisters, by the Lord Jesus Christ, but the blessing is given to you by Christ's pierced hands. Had He never suffered, you could never have been saved. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." The disciples saw not merely that it was a blessing from their Lord, and a blessing that cost Him the nail prints, but that it was a blessing which came by the way of His pierced hands. We get everything good through Christ and especially through His atoning Sacrifice. We cannot have His righteousness apart from His suffering. We cannot get power to conquer sin and Satan apart from the hands that were pierced—

"When wounded sore the stricken soul Lies bleeding and unbound, One only hand, a pierced hand, Can salve the sinner's wound."

You may try all the royal hands in the world, but they cannot cure the true "King's evil"—the terrible evil of sin—till the pierced hand of Jesus is laid upon the poor sufferer. And then straightway the fever of despair ceases and the desperate love of sin is sucked out. The wounds of Jesus alone can cure the wounds of our sick humanity! What a blessing it is to know that the way to God's

heart is through the wounds of Christ! You cannot get anything from God except through those wounds. This is that ladder which Jacob saw in his vision. This is that gate of Paradise through which the righteous must enter. This is the refuge of those poor souls that are hunted by the roaring lion of Hell—they must speed away like frightened fawns to Jesus' wounds and find protection there! You know how our hymn puts it—

"Him and then the sinner see, Look through Jesus' wounds on me."

It is a blessing even to look at those pierced hands—not with these mortal eyes, for they might have gazed upon them and yet we might not have believed on Him. But it is a great blessing to look, with the eye of faith, at the pierced hands of Jesus—to look at Him whom we have pierced and so to be caused to mourn over the sin that pierced Him. It is a great blessing to have a broken heart mourning because of sin and to look at Jesus Christ and to know that He has carried my sins right away with those dear pierced hands of His—that is a still greater blessing! I pray the Lord to enable some of you to look at the pierced hands of Jesus. There is life in a look at Him! Turn now your eyes, though dimmed with tears, almost blinded with unbelief, with a cataract of despair forming over it and look as best you can to Him—

"Who bore, that you might never bear, His Father's righteous ire."

In those pierced hands alone you can find salvation, for all power in Heaven and in earth is given to those hands, and therefore is it that we preach the Gospel to you! Jesus is able, with a touch, to bestow salvation upon the very chief of sinners! So the blessing comes by the hands that were pierced.

I think that this action of Christ is an epitome of the Gospel, the substance of the whole matter—pierced hands distributing benedictions! There is Jesus, going up to Heaven from the earth, out of which He has risen from the grave where He was buried after He had died as the Substitute for sinners. And as He goes up, He is blessing men with His pierced hands. To a sinner I would say, "This is the way the blessing must come—from the pierced hands of the Christ who rose from the dead. Look up to Him and live."

III. I must not linger longer, though the theme is enticing, but must close with a third reflection. I have reminded you that the hands of Christ were uplifted to bless and that those hands were pierced hands. Now, thirdly, I have to show you that THOSE HANDS SWAY THE

Volume 51 9SCEPTER. We look back to Calvary and Olivet and remember that the hands that blessed us were the hands that bled for us. Now look forward and see that the hands that blessed us are the hands that rule the world!

At this very moment, the scepter of Providence is held in the hand that was pierced—the hand of the Man of Love, the Crucified, for, "all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." There is not an angel in Heaven who does not delight to do His bidding—and the time shall come when "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Further, those hands which blessed us, are the hands that rule the Church of God. At this moment Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks, bearing blessings to the divers branches of His

Church, everywhere ruling in all things, for He is "the Head over all things to the Church."

And those are the hands which we shall see on the morning of the Resurrection when the trumpet shall sound and that Great White Throne which, like a mirror, shall reflect every man's inmost self and shall fill the center of the wondrous assembly of all men of all nations and ages! The hand of the Judge shall be the hand of our Redeemer! The spouse in the Song of Songs says of the Bridegroom, "His hands are like gold rings set with beryl." Whatever that charming imagery may mean, I am sure it cannot be good enough to express the beauty of Christ's hands to us. The brightest gem that monarch ever wore could not be compared, for a single second, to the beauty of those wounds of His—

"Now resplendent shine His nail prints, Every eye shall see His wounds. They who pierced Him Shall at His appearance wail"—

but we shall not, for we shall say, "Those are the very hands that blessed us! The last time they were seen of mortal men, they were extended in blessing His disciples, so they cannot be the hands to smite us, for He does not first bless and then curse." It shall never be said of Him, "Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing" to His people. No, He says, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." And in those nail prints Jesus reads the names of all His people. For love of them He bore all that He endured for their sakes. Jacob's hands, no doubt, bore the marks of his 14 years of toil for Rachel. And if he ever showed them to her, they must have appeared fair in her sight because they were tokens of his long-tried love. But, oh, what blessed tokens of love will Christ's nail prints be to us and what blessed assurances will they be to us that, having loved us so much, He will never curse us—that having bought us with His blood, He cannot cast us away! "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" You cannot separate the nail prints from the hands, nor can you separate those who were redeemed by the blood of Jesus from the heart of Him who redeemed them! In His flesh He bears the tokens of His eternal union with us and that nail print is like the marriage ring—the token that He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and one with us forever. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Paul truly wrote, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

What is to come out of all this? Have you seen Christ in any measure tonight? Has the Holy Spirit made use of my tongue, as a truth, to paint a picture? Have you, by faith, seen Christ rising with uplifted hands, the pierced hands, the hands that are to sway the scepter of universal Sovereignty? Then do just what His disciples did. First, "they worshipped Him." Let us render to Jesus now, in our minds, a distinct act of worship. Let not the day close till, in addition to all those devotions which we are accustomed to render to Him, we adore Him! A cloud is between us and Him, but the comfort is that it is only a cloud and the sun soon breaks through a cloud. It is a cloud that is raining blessings on us, for it was expedient for us that Christ should go away and the descent of the Spirit is one of the results of His Ascension to Heaven! He can shine through that cloud and shine through it gloriously, too! Let us worship Him now. "Blessed be Your name, O Eternal God, Immanuel, God With Us!" Adore Him, Brothers and Sisters, in the silence of your soul.

Then, next, like the disciples, let us be filled with joy, for we are told that "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Yes, you must go back to your Jerusalem. You must go home. You must go among ungodly men and women to serve your Lord. But go, as the disciples

did, "with great joy"—go with this jubilant note on your lips—

"Our Lord is risen from the dead! Our Jesus is gone up on high! The powers of Hell are captive led— Dragged to the portals of the sky."

I have known that one thought of our Lord's exaltation lifts me up from the borders of despair. In a dread hour, long since past, when reason almost reeled after great calamities had overtaken me, I recovered my balance and my peace of mind in a single moment by the recollection of that one text, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." I felt, after the tragedy in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, like the soldier who was mortally wounded and lying in a ditch, but I seemed to hear the shout, "God has highly exalted HIM," so I did not care what became of me as long as my Lord was exalted. It is said that one of the great Napoleon's soldiers lay wounded and bleeding to death, but he saw the Emperor ride by and his eyes flashed fire again! And he said, "Never mind what becomes of me, for the Emperor is safe." That was how I felt, in a far higher sense, concerning my exalted Lord. And I said to myself, "So long as He lives and reigns, all is well! Men may rave at me as they will, but what does it

Volume 51 11 matter so long as He is exalted? "I want you, dear Friends, to feel like that concerning your ascended Lord. Go home and worship Him and be filled with great joy!

Then there was another thing that the disciples did. They "were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." Let your joy have adequate expression. Jesus is risen, so begin to praise Him and, having once begun, keep on praising Him and never leave off as long as there is cause for praising Him—and that will be forever and ever! Jesus has gone up to Heaven and cleared an open way for us right up to the Throne of God! So send your praises up to Him! Let your heart mount from the earth right up to the heart of God! I can urge you to do this, but only the Holy Spirit can enable you to do it—and I pray that He may do this for all the Lord's people now.

If outsiders are asking, "What have we to do with this Jesus who has gone up into Heaven?" let me remind you of another purpose of His exaltation. Peter said to the high priest, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel"— that is, to the very chief of sinners—"to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And it is through faith in Him that this forgiveness may be given to you. If you trust in Him who has risen from the dead and gone into His Glory, you shall be saved, for, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." That is what He is doing now, so trust Him with your case, trust Him now, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

John 1,11 #1055 - Ingratitude of Man

INGRATITUDE OF MAN

NO. 1055

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 9, 1872,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

John 1:11.

I WOULD very frankly confess at the outset that I am not about to

preach from the words of this text and that I have selected it solely because it contains an epitome of man's behavior towards the Savior. He came unto His own people, the Jews, and answered in every particular to the descriptions which their Prophets had given. But as they were looking for a temporal leader who should dazzle them with an earthly kingdom, they would not acknowledge the true Messiah. And though He continued to come unto them preaching and working such miracles among them as no other man did, so that their unbelief was without excuse, they still rejected Him. This was a gross act of ingratitude. It was superlative kindness which brought Jesus to that nation in particular and to the sons of men in general—it was supreme ingratitude when that nation, alas, in this representing us all, would not receive Him, but rejected the Lord of Glory.

I use our text as an illustration of the ingratitude of men towards our Lord, and it is upon that subject that I intend to preach at this time. I lay the charge against not only those who lived in Christ's day, but against mankind in general—against this assembly in particular—and against myself, also, in sad measure. We have treated the Lord ungratefully and have not rendered unto Him according to the benefits received. In commencement, we shall speak upon the fact that those among whom Jesus lived were guilty of ingratitude towards Him. Secondly, coming home to ourselves, we shall dwell more at length upon the lamentable fact that we, too, are guilty of ingratitude towards Him. We shall close by observing, What then? What follows out of this? What lessons are we to learn from it?

I. First then, THE PEOPLE AMONG WHOM OUR LORD DWELT WERE GUILTY OF INGRATITUDE TOWARDS HIM. They were a favored people above all nations. It was a distinguishing mark of Divine favor that the Messiah should be born among them. They ought to have received Him with delight. His signs and evidence of Messiahship were clear enough. He worked among them unexampled miracles, and He spoke as no other man spoke, yet they rejected Him, treating their best friend as though He had been their worst foe. This was a high-handed act of national ingratitude!

Special cases occurred in our Lord's life involving still greater ingratitude. Among the people of Israel many became partakers of our Lord's healing power. Many blind eyes did He bless with sight. Into many deaf ears did He cause sound to enter. Not a few lame men leaped as an hart at His bidding, and many that were sick of palsy and all manner of diseases were suddenly restored by His word. Yet the mass of these healed ones did not become His disciples, for the number of His male disciples, after He had ascended, was about 120—yet our Savior had not healed merely120, but, according to the Evangelists, many hundreds—I might, without exaggeration, say many thousands had been partakers of His healing benefits! They were in their own persons testimonies to the Lord's Divine power and yet they did not worship Him!

From where did this obstinate unbelief come? Strange ingratitude this must have been, that a man should owe to Christ his eyes, and yet refuse to see in Christ his Savior—that he should owe to Christ the tongue with which he spoke, and yet should be silent in the great Physician's praise! Yet so it was. Many were healed, but few believed. We know, moreover, that our Lord fed thousands of hungry persons. He multiplied loaves and fishes, and fed crowds so that they did all eat and were filled. For a time He was very popular with them—as anyone will be who has loaves and fishes to distribute—and they would have made him a king, for idle men much desire a monarch who will supply their needs and relieve them from personal labor.

Yet these persons had no affection for His person or doctrine, but followed Him simply and alone for what they could get from Him. Many of these selfish followers, doubtless, gave their voices against Him and shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" They ate bread with Him and lifted up their heel against Him. Surely, after sitting at a table so marvelously supplied, reason itself would have suggested to every feaster that their Host must be a Prophet sent of God, if not God Himself. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing that men receiving so much at His hands should still remain unbelievers in Him.

The same treatment was dealt out to our Lord when He acted as the Teacher of the people. He taught them pure Truths of God in the best conceivable manner, and small, indeed, was His reward. They could not complain of His sermons, that they were dull and unattractive, or that they were austere and devoid of sympathy. We never read that a hearer ever fell asleep under Christ's preaching, as Eutychus did under the lengthy discourse of Paul. Neither were any terrified by His looks, as men have been by fierce fanatic leaders—His ministry was pleasing and charmed the ear—yet it was ill received. When His sermon at Nazareth was finished, what was His reward? They took Him to the brow of the hill and they would have cast Him down headlong had He not escaped!

When He taught the Jews in the Temple, "they took up stones again to stone Him." In return for His arguments of mercy, they assailed Him with the weapons of malice. Though, by declaring the glad tidings of salvation He rendered to His hearers the most precious service, some of them, in return, sought to entrap Him in His speech and others gnashed their teeth in rage against Him. He brought light into the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. Sometimes, when He found around Him a more select audience than usual, the great Teacher would not merely preach the elements of the Gospel, but would go more deeply into the mysteries of it, but He had no thanks for doing so. On one occasion He spoke to them concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood—but He had cast His pearls before swine—they turned again to tear Him apart! And

many of those who had followed Him up to that point forsook Him and walked no more with Him.

Even the disciples who were true at heart to Him did not always prize His sayings well enough to keep them in their minds—and they were not influenced by His teaching and example so much as they should have been. How often must the tender bosom of our Lord have been wrung with anguish over human unkindness? The adder's tooth of ingratitude left its print upon Him. Men returned unto Him evil for good, and for the heapedup measure of His benevolence they filled up equally high the measure of their hate. What a plaintiveness is there in that question which He asked after He had healed 10 lepers, and only one of them returned to thank Him—"Were there not 10 cleansed, but where are the nine?" as if He had expected at least that they would thank Him—it was the least they could do in return for so matchless a blessing as deliverance from a deadly disease!

Surely, whenever our Lord looked upon the handful of His followers He must have recollected the hosts upon whom He had conferred benefits, and said within himself, "Where are the nine?" From that thankless generation the meek and lowly One received no recompense of love for His temporal and spiritual bounties. Here and there a grateful woman ministered to Him of her substance, and now and then a thankful soul became His disciple. But, for the most part there was no response to His love, save such as that which Jerusalem heard when, for His tearful cries of compassion, He received shouts of murderous hate demanding that He should be crucified!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the further our Lord Jesus Christ went on in life the more did He experimentally know the base ingratitude of mankind. He lived for them—in obedience to His Father He spent His whole life for men. He lived first for God's Glory, and next for love of men. His meat and drink was to do men good. He forgot Himself—He utterly renounced all ambitious purposes and gave Himself away that He might seek and save the lost. As a mother devotes herself to her babe so did Jesus lay Himself out for men. No! No mother ever loved her babe as Jesus loved His own which were in the world! And yet, continually, in every way, men sought to take away His life, which was more valuable to them than it was to Him—for it was for their sakes, only, that He continued, still, to live on earth.

How often had He to escape their cruel hands, and when His hour was come how eagerly did they conspire to hound Him to His death! One would have thought when the mob stood in the street of Jerusalem howling out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" that He must have been a common informer who had betrayed men for self—or a poisoner who had secretly tainted the bread of the people with a deadly drug! Or a blasphemer who had profaned every holy thing! Or a wretch whose character was doubly dyed in infamy! Instead of which, there stood before that furious crowd the meekest among men! The most inoffensive, and, at the same time, the most generous! The most self-denying, the most tender Man of all of woman born. Yet, how lustily they cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and when the question is put by the Roman Governor, "Why, what evil has He done?" they can give no answer to it, and, therefore, they drown the question with their shouts, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Oh, base ingratitude of men to recompense such a life as His with such a cruel death!

At last that evil generation had its way with the Man of Sorrows and they took Him after He had been scourged, and led Him away to be crucified. We know well that He needed not have died even then. One thought of His could have averted the arrows of death. He had but to will it and the

nails would have sprung from their places, and from the Cross the Lord would have leaped into the midst of His foes—to their horror and dismay. He was dying for men! He suffered each pang for men! For men the crown of thorns! For men the nailed hands! For men the pierced side! For men the bleeding feet! For men the gall cup! For men the pain! And for men the thirst! "He saved others, Himself He could not save."

It was the greatest sacrifice that man had ever made for man, and yet how was it repaid? The cruel crowd stood around Him and scoffed at His pains. They made jests upon His Person—they insulted His faith—they mocked His prayers! O You dear Christ of God, gladly would we have covered Your sacred body from those lewd and brutal eyes, and sheltered Your tender spirit from those inhuman taunts, but so it could not be! Man is allowed to be infamous that You may suffer to the uttermost, and, in so doing redeem Your people! See the contrast—Jesus loves and man hates! He dies for sinners, and sinners insult Him in His agonies.

When our Lord had died and had lain in the grave three days, and had risen again, His rising was for men. He might have gone into His Glory if He had pleased, but He tarried for 40 days to minister blessings to His people. The requital which He received from the Jewish people was of the same evil character. They doubted whether He had risen from the dead at all, and there were those who were base enough to invent that idle tale concerning the stealing of His body at night by His disciples. They laid imposture to the door of the Son of God, and charged the Perfect One with acting a lie!

O man, how mad you must be! What strange insanity of iniquity is this that you do thus requite your loving Lord! I think I hear a murmur among you, as though you said, "Ah, but this was the guilt of the Jews—the crime of unbelievers. All were not so cruel." But surely you have forgotten that in this ingratitude even those who were nearest to Him had a share! Those who were His immediate companions were ungrateful to Him. What do you think of him who said, when his Lord had been anointed by a loving woman's hand for His burial, that it was a waste? That what was given to anoint the King of Glory might have been sold for much, begrudging an offering to that divinely generous One who had given up all for us? One would have thought that those who abode with Him would have unanimously delighted in every honor shown to Him, and one is apt to imagine that they should more often have interposed to screen Him, if they might, from the ills of poverty, weariness and need.

Among them all, was there not one who should have pressed hospitality upon Him again and again, that He might no longer cry, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head"? At any rate, when it came, at last, to the dying struggle, should not His bosom friends have watched with Him one hour? Might they not have guarded Gethsemane's gates when He left them outside the wall? And the three who came within a stone's cast of His grief and could hear His groans—could they not have forborne to slumber? Must they sleep while the Lord is in agony? He excused them, but could they excuse themselves?

The case of Judas was peculiarly afflicting to our Redeemer's sensitive soul. In him treason reached its climax and base ingratitude outdid itself. Yet Judas was an Apostle—the keeper of his Master's purse, the friend who ate bread with Him and lifted up his heel against Him. Shame on you, Judas! But, alas, you are not alone—others follow your hideous example, and some such may be among us! "Lord, is it I?" But, where were the rest of the disciples? Did they not

accompany their Lord to the judgment seat and come forward and boldly bear witness to the righteousness of His Character? Not one of them was there to do Him service! "All the disciples forsook Him and fled." One ventured where he saw his Master's ill-treatment, but he thrice denied Him and added oaths and curses, saying, "I know not the Man." Thus acted those whom He had carried in His bosom and loved even to the end!

Those to whom He had opened up His inmost soul—who had eaten with Him His last solemn meal before His passion—untrue to all their professions of affection, sought every man his own safety, and left Him to His fate. Call you not this ingratitude? What is worse than the ingratitude of bosom friends and Brethren? The indictment lies against all that were of His day with whom He came in contact, from the worst even to the best. Where is the advocate who will plead their cause? There was none faithful, no, not one. Ingratitude stained all.

II. But let us not think severely of them and forget ourselves, for we, too, are in the same condemnation. This is our second point—WE ALSO HAVE BEEN UNGRATEFUL TO OUR LORD. While I have been turning over this subject in my own mind it has deeply affected me. But I feel quite powerless to produce it before you so that you shall be affected in the same manner unless God the Holy Spirit shall now be pleased to melt your hearts. Remember that to bring a charge of ingratitude against a man is a very strong thing to do. I would not like to be called untruthful. I should grievously feel it, but to be called ungrateful is equally as degrading.

Can any accusation be more dishonoring? Ingratitude is a mean and despicable vice! He who is guilty of it is unworthy of the name of man. A soldier who had been kindly rescued from shipwreck and hospitably entertained, was mean enough to endeavor to obtain from Philip of Macedon the house and farm of his generous host. Philip, in just anger, commanded that his forehead should be branded with the words, "The ungrateful guest." That man must have felt like Cain when the mark of God was upon him—he must have desired to hide himself forever from the gaze of man. Prove a man ungrateful and you have placed him below the beasts, for even the brutes frequently exhibit the most touching gratitude to their benefactors.

The old classic story of Androcles and the lion rises before us—the man healed the lion, and years after, the lion, being let loose upon him, crouched at his feet and acknowledged him as a friend. Only the most despised creatures are used as metaphors of ingratitude! For instance, we speak of the donkey which drinks, and then kicks the bucket it has emptied, but we never speak thus of nobler animals. An ungrateful man is thus lower than the animals! Inasmuch as he returns evil for good, he is worse than bestial—he is devilish. Ingratitude is essentially infernal. Ingratitude to friends is vile, to parents it is worse—but to the Savior it is worst of all!

Therefore, what I shall have to say must not be received with coolness, as though the charge were a trivial one. It is a very serious matter that we should be open to an indictment of ingratitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear, then, and sorrow as you hear, for I also mourn as I speak! I lay the charge, first, against Believers—against those of us who are Christians—and are, therefore, most indebted to Christ's love and Grace. And we will observe at the outset that every sin of the Believer has in it a measure of ingratitude, for, since our Savior has suffered by reason of our sins, we are ungrateful when we wander into sin! Since He came to destroy the works of the devil—it is ungrateful to build, again, that which He has destroyed.

Shall that very sin which was the murderer of our Beloved be harbored by us? The very thought is treason! Since these sins of mine were my best Friend's worst enemies, and more to be blamed than the Jews or the Romans, would it not be a shameless need of love to make them my bosom companions? Our sins were the nails and our unbelief the spear! Away, then, with them all! Brothers and Sisters, if we do not watch most carefully against our besetting sins we shall be false to our Redeemer. If a woman saw her husband's murderer before her and gave her heart to him, what should we think of her? May the Lord, by His Grace, prevent us from being equally shameless! May Grace enable us to take vengeance on our sins because they drew down vengeance on our Savior!

Saints are especially ungrateful to the Lord Jesus when they allow any rival to set up his throne in their hearts. He, "the chief among 10,000 and the altogether lovely," deserves to be admired and adored by our souls— not only beyond all others—but to the exclusion of all others. If your hearts were capacious enough to hold a thousand times more affection than they now contain, the Lord Jesus would deserve it all! If our hearts were as wide as Heaven, yes, as vast as seven heavens in one—Jesus, having bled and died for us ought to monopolize all our love! Yet we must confess that a wife, a child, a friend will steal away our hearts. Ambition for position, love of pleasure, desire to please, joy in wealth will invade and conquer a province of our hearts. Oh, base ingratitude which allows us to set up Dagon in the temple where the Crucified One, alone, should reign!

Oh, wretched unfaithfulness, which pines after these fleeting things in preference to the eternal Lover of souls! How common is this ingratitude! Do I address a single child of God but what must acknowledge, "I am, indeed, guilty"? I sorrowfully confess my own offenses against the infinite love of Jesus in this respect, and will do so before God far more at large than here would be either fit or profitable. How often, too, might we be charged with ingratitude when we lose large measures of the Grace which we have already received. We have power given us, at times, by the Holy Spirit, to rise above the dead level of man's ordinary life, and we climb the mountain and stand upon a higher platform altogether.

There are times with us when we love the Lord with all our hearts— when our faith mounts to assurance and all our graces are bright and strong—but we come down from that mountain almost immediately! Our feet slide from the glorious elevation! It seems far easier to mount than it does to tarry aloft upon the wing. The Holy Spirit admits us into peculiar nearness to the heavenly Father and then we act inconsistently and lose our communion, and come to follow afar off as so many do. We have the sweet flavor of Divine love in our mouths and yet desert the banquet table—what is this but ingratitude? Is it not a slighting of the precious gifts of Jesus' Divine Grace?

He permits us to lean our heads on His bosom and we will not do so! He stands at our door and knocks, and we refuse to open to him! He calls us to take our fill of love, and we turn to the poor husks of earth. Have we not grievously provoked Him? Would He not long ago have divorced His unfaithful spouse if it had not been true that He hates putting away? Beat on your breasts, Beloved, and confess your ill manners towards your best Beloved!

Could we, any of us, plead innocence if the charge were brought in another way, namely, that we render Him but little service and give Him but lukewarm love? How much have we done for Jesus, after all? How much have we ever loved Him? How much do we love Him now? I must correct

myself— I ought to have said how little. If we hear of the death of Christ upon the Cross, we listen to it as coldly as though it were a thrice told tale with which we had no concern. How is this? Are our hearts like an adamant stone? A silly story of a lovesick maid will bring tears to our eyes far sooner than the tragedy of the Cross!

If we did but see one of our fellow creatures suffer but a millionth part of what the Lord of Glory bore for us, we should be moved infinitely more than we are, now, when Calvary is before us. Why? Is not this black ingratitude? Who can extenuate such need of tenderness? Our love to Jesus, is it love at all? When I read of some of the saints giving up all that they have, crossing the sea, penetrating into barbarous regions, bearing their lives in their hands, sacrificing comforts, and living day by day on the verge of death amid fever and wild beasts—and all that they might honor Christ—I am utterly ashamed! What are we, my Brethren? Unto what shall we liken ourselves? Like a Colossus such men bestride their age, while we, base things, hide our dishonorable heads for shame at our spiritual littleness!

The love of Christ to us is like that ancient furnace which was heated seven times hotter, while our love is like a solitary spark which wonders within itself that it is yet alive. May the Holy Spirit change this and give us yet to glow and burn with sacred fire like the bush in Horeb when it was aglow with Deity!

The same humiliation reflections arise when we meditate upon the consecration, or rather non-consecration, of our substance to the Redeemer's cause. What a small portion do the most of us give to His work, or to His poor! If you were to take the numbers of Church members, and the contributions to missions, you would hardly dare to say how little per head is given! It is so trifling that it is rather an insult to the Savior than an offering to Him. Some hearers even try to cheat the minister whom they flock to hear and evade every claim, even from the Church to which they belong. For the most part, when Christians take stock of what they have, and then calculate what they have given, they have great cause for shame. If our estimate of Christ's worth is according to our gifts to Him, there are some who would not give 20 pieces of silver for Him. To some these remarks are more applicable than to others—to many congregations more necessary than to you, for, thank God, there are those among you who delight to honor the Lord with their substance. But these are the last persons to think that they have done enough—in fact, those who do most for Christ are the first to feel that they do far too little!

Furthermore, Brethren, how often is ingratitude shown to our Lord Jesus by neglect of His commands. Some professors need to be driven to obedience. If you tell the man who earnestly loves Christ his duty, he is charmed to know it, and to attend to it at once. But love to Christ is so low in some professors' hearts that you must hammer the precept into them again and again, and again, and again! And yet they will linger long before they will fulfill their Master's will. They must be persuaded and threatened before they will yield. Fervent gratitude runs with winged feet wherever Jesus bids it go. If we were more jealously obedient to our Lord, it would be evident that we were more grateful to Him.

Now, I feel, Brothers and Sisters, in my heart as if I would be glad to have done preaching, for I need to get alone and sigh and weep this sermon over by myself. I need to confess and mourn over my own conscious ingratitude to my ever-blessed Lord, whom, nevertheless, I love. I do remember well the time when I imagined that if the Lord would only give me pardon through the

atoning blood, nothing would be too difficult for me to attempt for His dear sake. And yet, though I have been cleansed from sins and accepted in Christ Jesus, I am too often sluggish in my Master's errands. Well do I remember when I first began to preach His Word—I thought if I might but have opportunities of pleading with men for Jesus I would pour out my very soul while I urged them to flee from the wrath to come!

Alas, although I am not altogether without zeal for God, my zeal falls far short of what it should be. Gladly would I speak fire—fire which should melt your hearts—and then set them on flame with ardent love to Jesus! I cannot reach my own ideal and I doubt not that if I could, I should still be faulty. I charge you not, my Brethren, with ingratitude without confessing and acknowledging it in myself. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us not confess with our lips only, but with inward penitential grief! Let us seek godly sorrow which works practical repentance! May we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, resolve that we will love our Lord better for the future and yield to the sweet constraints of His love.

Now I have a heavy task, indeed, and that is to speak of some whose ingratitude to Christ is even greater, if greater can be, for they utterly refuse to trust Him. I desire to speak with you to whom I have preached in vain these many years. The one topic of every Sabbath in this place is Jesus Christ crucified. I have other things to say to you, but this is repeated over and over again. You are told without ceasing that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Notwithstanding all this, up to this moment many of you refuse to trust Him! You "stumble at the Word being disobedient," and you thus make the rock of salvation to be a rock of offense to you.

If you deny it, I will ask you, Why, then, have you not accepted Him for your Savior? Why are you still alienated in your hearts from Him? Perhaps your reply is that you do not think of these things. Is this, then, your conduct towards the dying Savior—that you will not even think of Him? Is He nothing to you? Do you despise His blood? Perhaps it is that you do not understand. Then surely, in your case it must be a willful blindness of understanding, for the Truth of God has been put before you as plainly as words could utter it! And neither do I know how I could have spoken more clearly. You have rejected, up to this moment, the Christ who died for sinners! Do you know what you have done? I wish He would stand here upon this pulpit at this moment, that you might see who it is that you have despised.

See Him with the ruby drops still glistening upon His crown of thorns, His face bruised, His countenance lined with grief, His eyes red with tears, His shoulders furrowed with the lash, His hands and feet wounded with the nails and His side gashed with the lance—this is the Man of Sorrows whom you have refused! Look, now on Him whom you have pierced! Can you, in His Presence, continue your rejection? Will you still bar your hearts against Him? Will you now say to Him to His face, "Son of God, bleeding for human sin, we will not trust You! Son of Man, dying in the place of sinners, we will not yield to You"? Yet you have said that in His Presence, which is everywhere real, though undiscerned by eye or ear. With those eyes of fire which discern from Heaven everything that is done on earth, He has seen you impudently refusing to be saved by Him.

Alas, I have to go further. Some of you have not been content with rejecting the Lord, but have gone the length of opposing Him! You have made His Gospel the theme for jest and treated His

people with indignity. It always staggers me that men should treat the meek and lowly Jesus and His gracious Gospel so roughly. There is something so tender and so meek about the Savior that I pity from my soul the wretch who had the heart to strike Him in the face, or was so base as to insult with spit that dear and sorrowful visage! Once in the sack of a city, when the fierce soldiers had commenced a general massacre, a little child was seized by a rough warrior, who was about to kill him, but stayed his hand when the little one said, piteously, "Please, Sir, don't kill me, I am so little."

I think the Savior's meek and gentle manners might be a similar argument for staying the hand of wrath. Who can harm the harmless Lamb of God? Persecutor, what evil has Jesus done to you? Reviler, what has He ever said to injure you? When has He given you an ill word or look? Ah, it is to His silence that you owe your life! Should He accuse you, you would be undone forever! Yet He has not accused you to the Father, but has pleaded for your reprieve! Sometimes in our police courts you may have seen an inhuman husband brought before the magistrate for having maltreated the poor unhappy woman who is linked to him for life. The policeman has taken him in the very act of assaulting her—her poor sickly face bears evidence of his brutality.

She can scarcely stand, for his cruelty has put her life in jeopardy. Watch her closely. The magistrate asks her to give evidence against the creature who has so cruelly injured her. She weeps and shakes her head, but says not a word. She is asked, "Did he not ill-treat you yesterday?" She is long before she speaks, and then not a word is uttered against the husband whom she still loves, though there is nothing loveable about him. She declares that she cannot bear to appear against her husband and she will not. What a stone must that man's heart be if he does not love her from then on all her days!

But, see a nobler counterpart! There is the Lord whom you have injured by your hard speeches and cruel mockeries. See you not His face all marred with your bruises? Yet He does not accuse you to the Father but when He opens His mouth to speak for sinners, He cries, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He must be ingratitude incarnate who can continue to use Him or His cause despitefully! There is no chivalry, no—there is no manhood in the heart which treats despitefully one who neither provokes nor retaliates. I must add, before I close this point, that some are ungrateful to Christ, from whom, above all others, such conduct ought never to have proceeded. The text says—"He came to His own, and His own received Him not."

In this very place the Lord Jesus has come to those who appeared to be His own. You, Sir, were your mother's own boy, and she, now in Glory, was an ardent lover of the Savior. And when Jesus came to you He might have said, "This is the son of one of My dearest friends, the son of a woman whose whole heart was Mine—surely her son will love Me, too." Yet you did not respond to Him. Jesus has come to your house and found there a wife who ardently loves Him, and He might well have said, "Surely the husband of My handmaiden will receive his wife's Friend." Yet you have shut the door upon Him.

Possibly I address an unconverted person who is not only the son of a Christian father, but the child of one of God's own ambassadors, yet he himself is an enemy to God! Surely a minister's children should be the Lord's, and yet ministers' sons and daughters have been seen among reprobates. I know not why it is, but sadly often has this been the case. Do I address one such? I pray that you may no longer be ungrateful to your father's God. Yes, and there are some here who

years ago were sorely sick and on the borders of the grave, and they said, "Please, God, if we ever get up again, we will seek the Lord." You were thus in a sense, "His own" by your own voluntary vow—but you have not received Him.

Today the Lord Jesus comes to you again, and shows His hands and side, and asks you why it is you break your promises to Him? He asks why it is you love not your mother's Savior? Why it is you care not for your father's God? And what it is that has turned you against Him? Many good works has He shown you, and for which of these do you stone Him? He is full of love, and pity, and mercy and power to save—for what reasons do you reject Him?

May the Lord grant that these appeals may have power with you by the voice of the Holy Spirit. III. I close by answering the question WHAT THEN? What comes of all this? Why, first, let us appreciate the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ! We must never lower our estimate of the bodily pains of Jesus. They were undoubtedly very great, but, after all, His mental sufferings were far greater and among the most acute of them must have been this—to be always treated with ingratitude by those whom He loved so well. Do I address, here, a tender heart which has bled from the stabs of ingratitude? A mother with an ungrateful son? A friend with a treacherous friend?

You know that nothing stings more than ingratitude, yet your Lord had to feel it every day! He was always occupied in doing everything for men, and men, on the other hand, were doing everything against Him. He was from day to day like Sebastian the martyr who was bound to a tree and made the target for a thousand arrows. The archers have sorely shot at Him and wounded Him, but His love abides in strength and so remains to this day.

Next, admire the Savior's love. When a man is kind and loving he will continue so until he meets with base returns, and then he is very apt to become indignant and stay the course of his benevolence. When we try to bring men together who have fallen out with each other—where ingratitude has been the cause of it—we use strong arguments. We have to say to the injured person, "You have been badly used, but labor to rise superior to it all. It is true that such ingratitude does deserve to forfeit your kindness, but do more than ordinary men would do—heap coals of fire on the ungrateful head!"

The Savior knew that men would be unkind to Him. He knew it all beforehand, and when men were ungrateful He did not merely hear their words, but He read their hearts—and He knew that their hearts were yet more opposed to Him—yet He never turned aside from His course of love. He pressed on, still, through reproaches and shame and derision and every form of human evil till He had finished the redemption of His people! Admire His love and let it kindle in you love in return.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, see next the mighty power of the pardoning blood of Jesus. Jesus can take away even this scarlet sin of ingratitude! Though He came to His own and His own received Him not, yet to as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name. Have you rejected Jesus 50 years? Come to Him even now, and He will blot out your sins in a moment! Have 70 years rolled over your guilty head, and have you remained deaf to all His appeals of mercy? Yet come and welcome, come and welcome! The gentle Savior has not exhausted His pity! May His Spirit draw you now, and you shall find Him as ready to receive you as He would have been 50 years ago. Admire the Grace which continues to

invite and the efficacy of the blood which is still able to cleanse.

Another practical lesson is to let us see how we ought to forgive. If another man has injured me it is no reason why I should injure myself. Perhaps you do not see the application of that utterance. Well, here is the explanation of it. If I have loved a man and his only return is unkindness, shall I injure myself by leaving off loving him? After all, it will be a great injury to my heart to become unkind. If I have sought a man's good and he has only returned me evil, do not let me bring myself down to his level. Let me rather seek to rise higher! And because of his evil let me seek to do more good to him—then I shall be like Christ, for He did! When our sin abounded, His Grace did much more abound! In our Lord's life, sin and love contested which should win the day. Man sinned yet more and more, and Christ loved yet more and more. On the Cross He loved to the death and won the battle, and this day human ingratitude is beneath the feet of the conquering Savior. Love has won the day and sin is crushed beneath its feet. O Christian, do battle in the same spirit and the Lord help you to be more than conqueror through Him that loved you!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, lastly, let us judge how we ought to live in the light of this subject. If we have been ungrateful up till now, shall we be so any longer? No, let us now, on bended knee, with earnest soul, cry to God to inflame us with something of the fire which set the Savior on a blaze with sacred ardor for our good! Let us devote ourselves wholly to Him. Let us cry, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar." What manner of people ought we be who owe so much to the Grace of God?

And there is this mournful reflection—what will become of those who shall die after having lived a life of constant ingratitude to Christ? There is a limit even to His mercy, for death shuts the golden gate of love. Justice takes the place of mercy as soon as the impenitent man has closed his dying eyes. An excellent writer has well said that, "Divine justice is love in flames," and so it is. When once love turns to jealousy, it is cruel as the grave—the coals thereof are of juniper that have a most vehement flame. You may despise Him, whose feet were pierced, and reject the Savior whose heart was opened with the spear—but He will come again. I know not when, but His Word is, "Behold, I come quickly."

Beware, I pray you, for in that day this shall be the word, "Behold, you despisers, and wonder and perish!" In that pierced hand shall be a rod of iron and He shall break His enemies in pieces like potters' vessels! His pierced feet shall be sandaled with light and out of the mouth which now speaks promises shall come forth a two-edged sword with which to strike His adversaries.

"Kiss the son lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little." He will forgive you now! He waits to be gracious to you now! Mercy now rules the day! But let the sun of mercy go down and the blackness of darkness shall abide forever. O provoke not the Lord! May His mercy turn your hearts by the power of His ever blessed Spirit and unto Him shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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Chapter 59

John 1,11-13 #1212 - Faith and Its Attendant Privi

FAITH AND ITS ATTENDANT PRIVILEGES

NO. 1212

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as

many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the

sons of God, even to them which believe on His name:

which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,

nor of the will of man, but of God."

John 1:11-13.

ACCORDING to this text, the principal matter in our salvation is faith. Faith is described as "receiving" Jesus. It is the empty cup placed under the flowing stream. It is the penniless hand held out for heavenly alms. It is also described in the text as "believing on His name." And this reception, this believing, is the main thing in real godliness. Faith is the simplest thing conceivable! When we hear people sing, "Only believe and you shall be saved," they sing the Truth of God, for we have the Divine assurance that "whoever believes on Him is not condemned." The Gospel message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

The act of faith is the simplest in the world. It may be performed by a little child. It has often been performed by persons so short-witted that they have been almost incapable of any other intellectual act. And yet faith is as sublime as it is simple, as potent as it is plain! It is the connecting link between impotence and Omnipotence, between necessity and allsufficiency. He that by faith lays hold on God has accomplished the simplest and yet the grandest act of the mind. Faith is apparently so small a matter that many who hear the Gospel can hardly believe it possible that we can really mean to teach that it brings salvation to the soul. They have even misunderstood us and imagined that we have meant to say that if persons believed they were saved, they were saved.

If that were the doctrine of Justification by Faith, it would be the most wicked of delusions. It is not so! Faith in Jesus as our Savior is a very different thing from persuading ourselves to believe that we are saved when we are not! We believe that men are saved by faith, alone—but not by a faith which is alone. They are saved by faith without works, but not by a faith which is without works. The faith which saves is the most operative principle known to the human mind, for he that believes in Jesus for salvation, being saved, and knowing that he is saved, loves Him that saved

him—and that love is the key of the whole matter!

The loving Believer ceases from everything which would displease Him whom he loves. He tries to abound in that which will please Him, his beloved Redeemer. So salvation becomes the great reason for gratitude and changes the heart! And, the heart being changed, all the issues of life are changed. The man is like a watch which has a new mainspring—not a mere face and hands repaired—but new inward machinery with freshly adjusted works which act to a different time and tune. And whereas he went wrong before, now he goes right, because he is right within. Faith is so simple that the little child who believes becomes, before long, strong in the Lord. It is a vital force which gets such mastery over men that it makes them other men than they ever were before!

And as it grows, it lifts them up from being mere men, to be men of God, and then beyond that it leads them on till they become heroes and they stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of flames, obtain promises and enter into rest. Faith the size of a grain of mustard seed develops into faith that moves mountains! Faith of the little child increases into faith of the giant! May we know by experience how true this is! Our object is to show what faith does. And, O, while I am trying to speak of this great gift of the Lord to men by which they obtain every other gift, may many of you who have not believed come to believe in Jesus! If you do, there is nothing in this text but what shall certainly be yours.

I. We shall begin by saying that FAITH MAKES THE GRANDEST OF DISTINCTIONS AMONG MEN. This is clear from the text. Faith makes the grandest distinctions among men, for the text begins, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not"! That is one company—"but as many as received Him"—that is another company. Were an angel to come here with a drawn sword and to suddenly separate the righteous from the wicked with one stroke, you would find that his sword had for its edge the question, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" This divides men into saved Believers and unbelievers with the wrath of God abiding on them.

"He that believes has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God." There are many distinctions among men—some proper and some improper—and there always will be such distinctions while this age lasts. There are rich and poor—and I fear there never will be a form of society in which there will be no poor. Even in the kingdom of Christ, when He comes, it seems there will be poor, for He shall judge the poor and needy. There will be the governors and the governed. The wise and the foolish. The teachers and the taught. But, mark you, these distinctions pass away. The grave is an awful leveler.

There in the sepulcher Caesar is no more than his vassal, Socrates no greater than the slave who washed his feet! The great emperor who swayed the scepter has, in the tomb, no higher rank than the bondwoman who toiled at the mill. Death recognizes no caste, the sepulcher believes in equality. At the Judgment Seat temporal distinctions will not be recognized except so far as they involve responsibility—and so far as that point goes, some of the great and mighty will then wish that they had been slaves—and regret that they cannot hide their heads among those whom they oppressed! The grand distinction which will outlast all time is that of faith or lack of faith. Do you believe or do you doubt? This makes the broad line of distinction! To the receivers of Christ or the non-receivers— to which do you belong, dear Friend?

I want you to observe that the faith which makes the distinction is described here as a receptive faith. Saying faith becomes a working faith by degrees, but at first it is a receptive faith. And in fact, work as it may, afterwards, it must always be a receptive faith! We only work out our salvation as God works in us—and even the highest actions that are ever done for God are performed with the strength which God supplies. Working faith is merely receptive faith in action. A receiving faith is the vital point and it is absolutely necessary that the soul should receive Jesus to be its All in All. "To as many as received Him." Have you ever received Him, the Lord Jesus, the real Christ? Do you talk to Him? Do you know Him? Is He a companion? Is He a friend of yours? If you have received a personal Christ by confiding, trusting and depending upon Him, you are on the safe side of the house!

The text further says, "Even to them that believe on His name." Now, what is it to believe on His name? It struck me it would be a fair and a right way of illustrating the text to notice what are the names which are used in the former verses of this chapter. Please notice, in the first chapter of John, where our text is, what name of Jesus is used. "In the beginning was the Word"—that is the first name. The Word. What is the meaning of that? Why is Jesus Christ called the Word? Why, because, Brothers and Sisters, if I want to communicate to you by writing or by speech, I use a word. My thought is here—and there is your mind.

I could get the thought partly to your mind by a picture—that is what God has done in Nature. But we cannot use pictures for a full communication of knowledge—we must employ words. So God, wanting to speak to man, spoke by sending Christ and Christ is God's Word. Have you ever received Christ as God's Word? Will you just think of it, what a wonderful Word He was? God said, "Men, stand no longer at a distance from Me. I will come and dwell among you"—33 years the Son of God dwelt among the sons of men! "Men," He said, "Men, I must punish your sins." There hung His Son bleeding on the tree for sin—God saying in a wonderful way—"I hate sin and therefore Jesus must die."

The Lord next cries, "Men, I can now be just and yet can justify you. Come unto Me." There is Jesus risen from the dead, in newness of life, and He goes into Heaven a Man and, as Man, is received to the Throne of God—and thus God says in a word to us, "I am willing to receive you up to My very Throne." Actions speak louder than words, but Christ, Himself, is the Word, the love-Word, the tender Word, the very heart-Word of God— with acts attending and following which make His utterance the more convincing! God kept nothing back when He spoke Christ. He spoke that Word and that Word is the fullness of God's soul to sinners!

Have you ever accepted Christ as the Word between you and God? Have you ever spoken to God that Word back again by pleading the name of Christ? Lord, there is no communication between me and You except this! Whenever You speak, you say, "Christ," and my reply is, "Christ." When I want You to pardon me, I say, "Christ." When I need You to bless me, indeed, and give me answers to my prayers, I plead, "Christ." That is the Word from God to man, and back again from man to God.

Now, to as many as believe on His name as the Word, to them He gives power to become the sons of God. But many have never accepted Him as, "the Word," any more than if God had never spoken. They are deaf. At any rate, there is the Word and they have never received it. Look down the chapter and you will find that Jesus is described as the Life. "All things were made by Him, and

without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life." Have you believed on His name as the Life? Man is dead by nature. When God said to Adam, "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die," Adam did die that very day and that is the key word to what is meant by death in the Scriptures. Did he cease to exist? No, nor will you.

But he ceased to live and that is a very different thing. To exist is not to live, there is a wide distinction there. To die is not to cease to exist—no thoughtful man should fall into such an error. What is death? Practically it is the separation of a living being into its component elements. When the seed is put into the ground, the Apostle says, it is not quickened unless it dies, or dissolves into its constituent elements. It dies in order more perfectly to live. When we die, neither body nor soul ceases to exist, but they cease to be united and their separation is death. When a soul departs, (and the life of the body is the soul), the life of the body is gone. When a soul dies, it is separated from God, for union to God is the soul's true life. That is the death which Adam died and which every impenitent sinner will have to die. No, that is the death which every sinner is under now, for, "he that believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Listen well that, "he that believes not has not life." He has an existence and always will have, but he has not life— he abides in death. But as for the man who believes in Jesus, he gets back his God and that is his life! Jesus says, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that lives and believes in Me shall never die." "I am the Resurrection and the Life." When we are brought back to God, God has made our soul alive! A soul without God is like a fair palace which has been deserted—you pace through all its halls and there is not a sound. It is all death, decay and emptiness. But when the king comes back, again, to his palace, the merry bells peal out their joyful notes! All is rejoicing and there is life again throughout the house. God is the life of the soul and as many as receive God in Christ, receive the Life.

Now see, Jesus is first the Word, that is God speaking to men. Secondly the Life, that is God quickening man and dwelling in him. Have we so received the Christ of God? Note the third name here. "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men." Notice that this name of Jesus is repeated many times if you read through the chapter. "John came for a witness to bear witness of the Light. He was not that Light, but he was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light," and so on. So that the next name of Christ we have in this chapter is the Light. Have we received Christ as the Light? What is it to have Christ to be your Light? What is light? It is that by which we see. Everybody sees in a light.

Take an illustration—only an illustration. A merchant comes to a city, town, village. He calculates whether it is a good place for business. "Bad place, this," he says. "A man cannot live here. It is a bad situation." And he is not content unless he gets near the Bank or in Lombard Street, or some other business quarter. Now look at the artist. He has another light. You take that artist into the city and he says, "I could not live here in this dreary wilderness of brick, amid these fogs! Let me get away to North Wales, or somewhere where the picturesque is to be seen." And he settles himself down in Bettws-y-coed, and he says, "This is beautiful."

Take the rich man there and say to him, "You are to live here for 20 years." "Twenty years?" he says, "I could not live here a month! It is preposterous. This is not a place where a man can live." Bring a man of gaiety into a religious circle and he says, "O, I need a place where there is some life." I have been traveling, sometimes, where I thought the scenery very beautiful and I have

heard young men say, "This is a hateful place: there is no life here." Everybody sees according to the light he sees by.

My dear Hearer, have you ever seen things in the Light of Christ? Did you ever feel, "this is the place where I can live, for here are Christians with whom I can commune. Here is the Gospel preached and my soul will be fed here. I shall learn much of Christ. This is a sphere in which I can be useful"? When you have Life you will get Light—and you will see things in that Light. You will see yourself in the Light of Christ. You will say, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Everything looks according to your light. Yellow spectacles will make everything look yellow, but get the true Light, the only Light that can lighten any man that comes into the world, and things will be seen in the Truth of God. If you get Christ within you, you have Light, indeed!

So the question comes back—have we believed on the name of Jesus as the Word, the Life and the Light? If we have, it has made a distinction between us and others, and there is a deep gulf fixed between us, across which, thank God, men may come to us by Sovereign Grace, but across which we shall never return—for he that has received the Word will find in it an incorruptible Seed! He that has received the Life has received with it the assurance, "Because I live, you shall live also." And he that has received the Light knows that it shines more and more unto the perfect day. This distinction, then, is a very grand one and it is one which obliterates all others, for the text puts it, "As many as received Him"—that is, if the chimney-sweep receives Christ, he is a child of God, and if the Czar of Russia receives Christ, he is a child of God—but not the one more than the other. If they receive Him—that is the point—they become the sons of God! It is a distinction, therefore, which is to be sought after abundantly by us, and which has to do with present things. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." Now I charge you, do not think of religion as a thing to be run after when you die, as your friends may seek after an undertaker to bury you. My bell sometimes sounds at the dead of night or at three in the morning. "Would you come and pray for a dying person?" They even say, "Pray to some dying person." Why do they send for me? Why do they not think of sending for me when the man is in good health?

They send for me when the man has taken stupefying drugs, perhaps, to lull pain, or he is half asleep with coming death, or his suffering is so intense that he cannot think! Or if he can think, he counts on my coming and my visit rather ministers to his superstition than to his benefit! Religion is for life as well as death. It is for today. "Now are we the sons of God." Oh, have the Gospel today, today, today, today! It is said that every man ought to repent on the last day of his life—this day may be yours— "therefore, today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." I have many things to say unto you, but time flies and I have much more left. This is the first head, then. Faith makes the grandest of all distinctions.

II. Secondly, FAITH OBTAINS THE GRANDEST OF ALL ENDOWMENTS. Read, "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." The margin says the "privilege." The margin is right, but so is the common reading. The word exousia is a very great word in the Greek. It cannot be comprehended in the word, "privilege," at all. It means power, privilege and a great deal more. Everyone that has believed in Jesus has received the privilege, the power and everything else that lies in being a son of God. This is described as being a privilege peculiar to Believers and yet there are rogues who are everlastingly talking about the

"fatherhood" of God because He made them.

I suppose the man who made that table is the father of the table. They assert that the Creator is the Father of all His creatures. That is not the sense in which Believers say, "Our Father which art in Heaven." If you are children of the devil and doing his works, why call God your Father? How dare you? If you have not believed on the Son of God, He is not your Father in the sense of the text—and you have no right to think of yourself as His son! The privilege of the text is, "to as many as received Him," for, "to them gave He the power" or, "the privilege to become the sons of God." As for the unbeliever, what is written concerning him? "The wrath of God abides on him."

Now, there is a distinction intended here in the use of this word, "son," rather than the old legal word servant. The most that they could attain to under the old dispensation was to be servants. "Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant." Yes, that is all. And what a blessed thing to be a servant of God! The poor prodigal would have been glad enough to have been one of the hired servants. But says our Master, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does, but I have called you Friends." And we know who has said, "For this cause He is not ashamed to call them Brethren," because they are sons in the same house. Oh, what a pleasure to rise from slavery to sonship! From the bondage of the Law to the glorious liberty of the children of God!

And that is where we all are who have believed. Only sometimes, you know, we do not live up to this sonship privilege. Those who are under the Law do not rise to sonship. They may be sons, but they are in their minority and the child, while he is yet in his minority, differs little from a servant, though he is lord of all. He is under tutors until he is of age. Christ has come and we are no longer under a schoolmaster, but now, blessed be His name, we are the sons of God! Are we not His servants, too? O, yes! Jesus Christ was first His Father's Son and then His Father's Servant. So we, being sons, have the joy of serving our Father. And I tell you it is a very different thing to serve your Father to what it is to serve a mere prince or ruler!

We are sons, then, rather than servants. We are called sons of God because of our new nature. We are the children of God by birth. We are also sons by likeness, for the Spirit of God dwells in us and we are made like unto God. The likeness between a son of God and God, Himself, is real and true. Have you ever seen the likeness between yourself and your child? Yes. Yes, he is very much like you. Some points of his character are caricatures of yours! You can see your image, distorted somewhat, and imperfect, but it is yourself. It is as near like yourself as a child can be like a man—but a child is not a man, for all that. So God makes His children like Himself, but they are miniatures, they are little, childish, weak. There are many imperfections and shortcomings, but still, mark that word, I often stagger as I read it—"He has made us partakers of the Divine Nature."

In moral qualities and spiritual actualities, He has given us power to become the sons of God, that is, by making us like unto God, showing us that as He is who was the Chief Son, so are we, also, in this world. Oh, the privilege of this! I assure you I would enlarge upon it if I did not feel that I am quite incompetent. I can only stand as John did when he wanted to tell us about it, and could only cry, "Behold," as much as to say—"Look yourself, I cannot tell you!" "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." We are such by prerogative, by nature, by growing like He and by privilege. We are now the sons of God.

Some of you do not know what this means. Children, you know, take many liberties with their father and are very familiar. I wonder what the little children of a judge think of him if they are ever taken into court to see him with his big wig on, sitting there trying prisoners? Well, I have no doubt they feel a great awe of him. But you should see him when he is at home! Why there he is down on the rug with the children on his back! He is the father and the father somehow swallows up the judge! And the child does not seem to remember that he is a judge, but only that he is his father. O, how many times has my soul, while prostrate with awe in the Presence of my God, laid hold on Him and said, "My Father, great as You are, You are not so great as to forget that You are my Father. You have taught me to say it, You have said, 'When you pray, say, 'Our Father,' and I do say it, and I feel that, 'Abba, Father,' is the natural cry of the spirit that is within me. Will you not answer to the cry?"

He does answer us and like as a father pities his children, He pities us. He bows His Omnipotence to help us in our little labors—and bows His mighty arms to help us in our little troubles. "He counts the number of the stars, and calls them all by their names. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." Is not that a grand stoop from rolling the orbs and wheeling the worlds along, to stoop down to bind broken hearts and to strap their wounds with Heaven's court plaster lest they should bleed too much? Blessed be his name!—

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

But we must pass on. Faith makes the grandest of distinctions and obtains the grandest of endowments.

III. Thirdly, FAITH IS THE EVIDENCE OF THE GRANDEST EXPERIENCE, for the text speaks of, "them that believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." This teaches us that every man who believes in Jesus is a regenerate man. He has been born of God! What a wonderful thing it is to be born again! There are poor blind men about who say that persons are regenerated by the application of water, though they have no faith, and grow up without any! May the Lord open their eyes! We will say no more, but wherever there is true regeneration there must be faith. Read the third chapter of John. See how faith and regeneration run together. Read this very passage—"To as many as believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man." Faith is the first, the unique token of being born again!

Now, what is it to be born again? I saw a big man once. A strong, rough fellow, and he was evidently under conviction of sin. He said, "Would God I had never been born." He thought again and he said, "I remember when I used to pray at my mother's knee. I knew nothing, then, of the wickedness and vice through which I have gone. Would God I could begin life again like a little child!" I was pressed to hear him say that, for it enabled me to say, "That is exactly what you shall do if you believe in Jesus. You shall be born again." But if we could be born again as we were born at first, that is, of the will of the flesh, we should do as we did before—for that which is born of the flesh, if it could be born twice of flesh—would be still flesh.

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and, "you must be born again from above"—you must be born of the Spirit of God. What the Spirit of God does for us is to give us a new life to start us

afresh with a new nature upon a new career. Whoever believes in Jesus is born again! Regeneration is a great mystery, but you have that mystery. Do not puzzle yourself about the new birth—you have experienced it if you really believe in the Lord Jesus. As I tried to explain it just now, you are born again. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus. You have begun life again. It is of little use to attempt to mend the old nature, it is too far gone. There was a certain prince who used to swear this oath, "God mend me!" But a good man says, "I think He had better make a new one."

Some men think God will mend them, but they err. I like the drunkard to become sober and the thief to become honest and mend himself as much as he can. But what he really needs is making over again. I have heard of a man who brought his gun to the gunsmith's to be repaired. "You want it repaired," says the smith. "Well, what it needs is a new stools dock and barrel." That looked very much like making a new one! You had better begin de novo. The old Law had for its token the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the distinguishing ordinance of the New Covenant goes much further.

What does Christ say to His people in the act of Baptism? He says, "You are dead. You must be buried and must rise into newness of life." Baptism cannot do this, but it sets forth our need of the death of the old nature and of resurrection into new life. We must be born again—not washed, not cleansed, not mended up—but made new creatures in Christ Jesus. And every man who believes in Jesus has undergone that wondrous change! He is not born of blood, that is not born according to the natural way of birth. He is born in a new, celestial manner. He is not born of the will of the flesh—man's bad carnal will—nor of the will of man, man's best will, for the will of man, when it has done all it can, has done nothing at all savingly. If you were born of the will of man, it would not answer the purpose—"born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

We need renewal by a supernatural power. God alone can create and God alone can new-create. To make a new creature is a greater wonder than to make a world, because when God made a world there was nothing to stand in His way. But when He makes a new creature there is the old creature in conflict with Him. If I may be allowed to commit so palpable an error of speech, I would say it takes double Omnipotence to re-create! We must be born from above, but we are saved if we have believed in the Lord Jesus. God grant that if any here have not believed, the new birth may be given them—and faith in Christ Jesus.

IV. Now, lastly, lest I weary you, FAITH RAISES THE BELIEVER TO THE NOBLEST CONCEIVABLE CONDITION. The man who has received Christ has undergone a new birth which fits him to be a child of God. Now, note, first, the inconceivable honor of being a child of God. Ah, if all the degrees, dignities, honors and titles that were ever conferred by men could be put into a heap, they would not make enough of real honor to be seen by a microscope—compared with the glory that belongs to the humblest, poorest and most despised son of God!

Son of God! "Unto which of the angels did He say at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You?" I know the text applies to Christ, but it applies, also, to all His people. His angels are servants—they are not sons. It is their delight to keep watch and ward about us, as servants do over young princes of the blood. "They shall bear You up in their hands, lest You dash Your foot against a stone." About the child of God there is even, here, a splendor which is none the less bright because carnal eyes cannot see it. It is like the splendor of God—invisible because too

excessive for eyes to see.

I will picture a child of God, if you please, a daughter of Zion. She is a poor seamstress. She has stitched a shroud as well as a shirt and she lies upstairs dying. You would not like to fare as she does. She dwells in a wretched little room. It is scantily furnished. The bed is hard and she lies there in agony. She can scarcely breathe. She gasps for life. She is very poor and those upon whom she is depending have begun to feel her a burden and sometimes say hard words to her. This is a gloomy place, is it not? Come here. I will touch your eyes as the Prophet did the eyes of his servant. And what do you see? You see one of the members of Christ's body struggling for the last time—and about to win the victory!

Listen to her! She tells you that Christ is with her! Do you see Him? There He stands in the deepest sympathy, bending over His beloved, smiling upon a soul that He has chosen from before the foundations of the world—a daughter upon whom He has put a garment without spot, meet for royal wear! She is a King's daughter! Look about the room. Angels are there, they are waiting all around her, waiting to take her Home! The Holy Spirit, Himself, is within her soul. Do you see the light of His consolations and revelations? If your eyes are open, you can see it. Yes, the Father Himself is here, for He is never away from the deathbeds of His children! "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." She has grown worse. Her eyes are dim. Her voice is feeble. Listen to her! I am picturing no fancy scene—I have heard it!

She is just about to enter into Life, and she cries—

"And when you hear my heart-strings break, How sweet my minutes roll! A mortal paleness on my cheek, But Glory in my soul!"

If she has strength enough left, you will hear her sing—

"'Midst darkest shades, if He appears, My dawning is begun; He is my soul's bright morning star, And He my rising sun." Do not talk to me of Joan of Arc! This is the true heroine! She is battling with Death and singing while she dies. Fear? She has long forgotten what that means. Doubt? It is banished! Distress? Despondency? She has left them all behind. She is a Believer! She has received Jesus and she has power to be a child of God! O, the honor and dignity of being born from above!

Now, note again the safety of this birth. If you are a child of God, how safe you are! I am sure there is no father and mother here that would let any harm come to their children. None of us would if we could protect them. Do you think God will suffer His children to be harmed? He will cover them with His feathers and under His wings shall they trust. His Truth shall be their shield and buckler. There shall no evil befall them— neither shall any plague come near their dwelling. "I, the Lord, do keep it. I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus."

Well may you sing that, for so you are if you are the children of God!

And, last of all, though much more might be said, what happiness this brings to a man to know that he is a child of God. I remember, some 22 years ago, being waited upon by a Mormon who wanted to convince me of the Divine mission of Joseph Smith. And after hearing some of his talk, I said, "Sir, would you kindly tell me what you have to offer me and how I am to get it? I will listen to you if you will let me tell you afterwards what I have to offer you and the way to it." I heard him with a great deal of patience. He listened to me not quite so patiently, but when I had done he saluted me thus, "If what you say is true, you ought to be the happiest man in the world!" To which I replied, "Sir, you are correct. I ought to be and, more, I am!" And so I left him.

And so I am, and so is every child of God that lives up to his privilege. You are a child of God—forgiven, accepted, beloved—what more do you need? In the name of goodness, what more do you need? If a man were to become an imperial prince, would he say, "I need more"? My dear Man, what more can you need? If you are a son of God, what more can you ask? I remember the time—perhaps you remember it for yourself—when I was in bondage under sin and I thought I should be sent to Hell. If the Lord had said to me, "I will forgive you, but you must live on bread and water till you die," I would have clapped my hands for joy! I would have said, "Lord, do but save me. If I can get rid of my sins, the very hardest lot will be a pleasure to me." Let us never complain, since we are possessors of salvation. The joy of the Lord is your strength. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice."

Remember this as a practical word. There is an old French proverb which says, "Nobility obliges." There is an obligation upon nobles. You do not expect to see great princes sweeping the street crossing. You would not expect to hear of Her Majesty the Queen acting like a milkmaid. Well, now, if you are a son of God, you must act like it! If I hear of a man who says, "I am a child of God," and he gives short weight and is hard in his bargains—I am ashamed of him! He a son of God? He who must make money! And hold it, and keep it? He, a son of God? He is not very much like his Father! Son of God? And yet sharp, quick-tempered, angry, spiteful! He is not very much like his Father. A child of God and do a mean thing? My dear Brothers and Sisters, what are you? A son of God and tell a lie?

A son of God and afraid of anybody? A son of God and cannot look your fellow man in the face without a blush? A son of God and at home a tyrant? Such conduct will never bear a thought—and he who is guilty of it gravely offends. When the great Emperor Napoleon was in his power, if a member of his family married below his rank, he was made to know the emperor's anger, for members of the imperial house were under bonds of honor to keep up their dignity. You girls here, who are daughters of God, dare you marry out of the imperial family? Never do that! Take care that you are not unequally yoked. When a king was taken prisoner, Alexander asked him how he would be treated, and he said, "Like a king."

Christian, act like a king! When a quarrelsome person offends us, we should say in our heart, "I would have quarreled with you, but I could not stoop to it. I am a child of God." I read a bitter remark of Guizot's to his enemies the other day, which ran something like this, "Come up the steps and mount as high as you can. And when you reach the top you will be beneath my contempt." So oftentimes may the child of God think of the world and all the shams, and all the temptations which are in it, "I have a great work. How can I come down to you? I am a son of God. My conversation is in Heaven! I cannot leave my position to come down to you."

Walk as children of light. "What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" You are "a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, zealous for good works." Do not demean yourselves! Go your way and may the Spirit of your Father rest upon you. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 3:1-24.

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John 1,11-13 #2259 - The Simplicity and Sublimity

THE SIMPLICITY AND SUBLIMITY

OF SALVATION

NO. 2259

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 5, 1892.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 6, 1890.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many

as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God,

even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of

blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

John 1:11-13.

EVERYTHING here is simple. Everything is sublime. Here is that simple Gospel by which the most ignorant may be saved! Here are profundities in which the best-instructed may find themselves beyond their depth. Here are those everlasting hills of Divine Truth which man cannot climb! Yet here is that plain path in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, need nor err, nor lose his way. I always feel that I have no time to spare for critical and captious persons. If they will not believe, neither shall they be established. They must take the consequences of their unbelief. But I can spare all day and all night for an anxious enquirer—for one who is blinded by the very blaze of the heavenly Light of God that shines on him and who seems to lose his way by reason of the very plainness of the road that lies before him! In this most simple text are some of the deep things of God and there are souls here that are puzzled by what are simplicities to some of us. And therefore my one aim shall be to handle this text as to help and encourage and cheer some who would gladly touch the hem of the Master's garment, but cannot for the press of many difficulties and grave questions which rise before their minds!

Let us go to the text at once and notice, first, a matter which is very simple—"As many as received Him...even to them that believe on His name." Secondly, a matter which is very delightful—"to them gave He power to become the sons of God." And thirdly, a matter which is very mysterious—"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

I. Here is, first, A MATTER WHICH IS VERY SIMPLE—receiving Christ and believing on His name. Oh, that many here may be able to say, "Yes, I understand that simple matter. That is the way in which I found eternal life!"

Volume 38 1The simple matter of which John here speaks is receiving Christ, or, in other words, believing on His name.

Receiving Christ is a distinctive act. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The very people you would have thought would have eagerly welcomed Christ did not do so! But here and there a man stood apart from the rest, or a woman came out from her surroundings, and each of these said, "I receive Christ as the Messiah." You will never go to Heaven in a crowd! The crowd goes down the broad road to destruction, but the way which leads to life eternal is a narrow way, "and few there are that find it." They that go to Heaven must come out one by one and say to Him that sits at the wicket-gate, "Set my name down, Sir, as a pilgrim to the Celestial City." They who would enter into life must fight as well as run, for it is an uphill fight all the way—and few there are that fight it out to the end and win the crown of the victors.

Those who received Christ were different from those who did not receive Him—they were as different as white is from black, or light from darkness. They took a distinctive step, separated themselves from others and came out and received Him whom others would not receive. Have you taken such a step, dear Friend? Can you say, "Yes, let others do as they will, but as for me, Christ is all my salvation and all my desire—and at all hazards I am quite content to be counted singular and to stand alone. I have lifted my hands to Heaven and I cannot draw back. Whatever others may do, I say, 'Christ for me'"?

As it was a distinctive act, so it was a personal one—"To as many as received Him." They had to receive Christ, each one, by his own act and deed. "Even to them that believe on His name." Believing is the distinct act of a person. I cannot believe for you any more than you can believe for me! That is clearly impossible. There can be no such thing as sponsorship in receiving Christ, or in faith. If you are an unbeliever, your father and mother may be the most eminent saints, but their faith does not overlap and cover your unbelief. You must believe for yourself. I have had to even remind some that the Holy Spirit, Himself, cannot believe for them. He works faith in you, but you have to believe! The faith must be your own distinct mental act. Faith is the gift of God, but God does not believe for us—how could He? It is for you distinctly to believe. Come, dear Hearer, have you been trying to put up with a national faith? A national faith is a mere sham! Or have you tried to think that you possess the family faith? "Oh, we are all Christians, you know!" Yes, you are all hypocrites—that is what that comes to! Unless each one is a Christian for himself, he is a Christian only in name—and that is to be a hypocrite. Oh, that we might have the certainty that we have each one laid our sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God! God grant that if we have never done so before, we may do so this very moment!

Mark, next, that as it was a distinctive and personal act, so it related to a Person. I find that the text runs thus, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." That religion which leaves out the Person of Christ has left out the essential point. You are not saved by believing a doctrine, though it is well for you to believe it if it is true. You are not saved by practicing an ordinance, though you should practice it if you are one of those to whom it belongs.

You are not saved by any belief except this—believing on Christ's name and receiving Him. "I take in a body of divinity," says one. Do you? There is no body of divinity that I know of but Christ, the Son of God in human flesh, living, bleeding, dying, risen, ascended, soon to come—you must lean on Him—for the promise is only to as many as receive Him.

This reception of Christ consisted in faith in Him—"As many as received Him...even to them that believe on His name." He was a stranger and they took Him in. He was food and they took Him in and fed on Him. He was living water and they received Him, drank Him up, took Him into themselves. He was light and they received the light. He was life and they received the life, and they lived by what they received. As the empty cup receives from the flowing fountain, so do we receive Christ into our emptiness. We, being poor, naked and miserable, come to Him, and we receive riches, clothing, and happiness in Him! Salvation comes by receiving Christ!

I know what you have been trying to do—you have been trying to give Christ something. Let me caution you against a very common expression. I hear converts continually told to give their hearts to Jesus. It is quite correct and I hope they will do so. But your first concern must be not what you give to Jesus, but what Jesus gives to you! You must take Him from Himself as a gift to you—then will you truly give your heart to Him. The first act and, indeed, the underlying act all along the way, is to receive, to imbibe, to take in Christ—and that is called believing on His name. Note that, "name." It is not believing a fanciful Christ, for there are many christs, nowadays—as many christs as there are books, nearly—for every writer seems to make a christ of his own. But the christ that men make up will not save you! The only Christ who can save you is the Christ of God, that Christ who, in the synagogue at Nazareth, found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

You are to believe on the Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures. You are to take Him as you find Him here—not as Renan, not as Strauss, or anybody else pictures of Him—but as you find Him here. As God reveals Him you are to believe on His name—"The Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Emmanuel, God With Us; Jesus, saving from sin; Christ anointed of the Father. You are to believe on His name, not on the Christ of Rome, nor the Christ of Canterbury, but the Christ of Jerusalem, the Christ of the eternal Glory! Not a christ of a dreamy prophecy with which some are defaming the true prophetic spirit of the Word, no christ of idealism, no man-made christ, but the eternal God, Incarnate in human flesh, as He is here pictured by Psalmist, Prophet, Evangelist, Apostle, very God of very God, yet truly Man, suffering in your place, bearing the sin of men in His own body on the Cross. It is believing in this Christ that will effectually save your soul! To believe is to trust. Prove that you believe in Christ by risking everything upon Him—

"Upon a life I did not live, Upon a death I did not die, I risk my whole eternity."

On Him who lived for me and died for me, and rose again for me, and has gone into Heaven for me—on Him I throw the whole weight of past, present, future and every interest that belongs to my soul, for time and for eternity!

This is a very simple matter and I have noticed a great many sneers at this simple faith—and a great many depreciatory remarks concerning it, but, let me tell you, there is nothing like it under Heaven! Possessing this faith will prove you to be a son of God—nothing short of it ever will. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God," and He has given that power to nobody else! This will prove you to be absolved, forgiven. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But if you have no faith in Christ Jesus, the wrath of God abides on you! Because you have not believed on the Son of God, you are condemned already! One grain of this faith is worth more than a diamond the size of the world—yes, though you should thread such jewels together, as many as the stars of Heaven for number, they would be worth nothing compared with the smallest atom of faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God!

But where does this wonderful power of faith come from? Not from the faith, but from Him on whom it leans! What power Christ has! The power of His Manhood suffering, the power of His Godhead bowing on the Cross, the power of the God-Man, the Mediator, surrendering Himself as the greatest Sacrifice for sin! Therefore, he who touches this has touched the springs of Omnipotence! He who comes, by faith, into contact with Christ, has come into contact with boundless love, power, mercy and Grace. I marvel not at anything that faith brings when it deals with Christ! You have a little key, a little rusty key, and you say, "By use of this key I can get all the gold that I need." Yes, but where is the box to which you go for the gold? When you show me and I see that it is a great chamber filled full of gold and silver, I can understand how your little key can enrich you when it opens the door into such a treasury. If faith is the key which unlocks the fullness of God, "for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," then I can understand why faith brings such boundless blessings to him who has it. Salvation is a very simple business. God help us to look at it simply and practically—and to receive Christ and believe on His name!

II. Now, secondly, here is A MATTER WHICH IS VERY DELIGHTFUL— "To them gave He power to become sons of God."

If I had a week to preach from this text, I think that I should be able to get through the first head, but at this time I can only throw out just a few hints. Look at the great and delightful blessing which comes to us by our faith in Christ. We give Christ our faith and He gives us power to become sons of God! The authority, liberty, privilege, right—something more than mere strength or force—to be sons of God!

When we believe in Jesus, He indicates to us the Great Father's willingness to let us be His sons. We who were prodigals, far away from Him, perceive that when we receive Christ—the Father, who gave us Christ—is willing to take us to be His sons. He would not have yielded up His OnlyBegotten if He had not willed to take us into His family!

When we believe in Jesus, He bestows on us the status of sons. We were slaves before—now we are sons! We were strangers, aliens, enemies and every word that means an evil thing might have been applied to us! But when we laid hold on Christ, we were regarded as the sons of God, as a man in Rome, when he as adopted by some great citizen and publicly acknowledged in the forum as being, from that day forward, that man's son, was regarded as such, so, as soon as we believe in Jesus, we get the status of sons! "Beloved, now we are the sons of God."

Then Christ does something more for us. He gives us Grace to feel our sonship. As we sang just now—

"My faith shall 'Abba, Father,' cry, And You the kindred own."

God acknowledges us as His children and we acknowledge Him as our Father and, therefore, "Our Father, which are in Heaven," is no meaningless expression, but it comes welling up from the depths of our heart!

Having given us Grace to feel sonship, Christ gives us the Nature of our Father. He gives us "power to become the sons of God." We get more and more like God in righteousness and true holiness. By His Divine Spirit, shed abroad in our hearts, we become more and more the children of our Father who is in Heaven, who does good to the undeserving and the unthankful, and whose heart overflows with love even to those who love Him not.

When this Nature of sons shall be fully developed, Christ will bestow His glory upon us. We shall be in Heaven, not in the rear rank, as servants, but nearest to the eternal Throne of God. Unto angels He has never said, "You are My sons," but He has called us sons, poor creatures of the dust who believe in Jesus! And we shall have all the honor, joy, privileges and delight that belong to the princes of the blood royal of Heaven— members of the imperial House of God—in that day when the King shall manifest Himself in His own palace! Some of us could draw parallels about being made sons, from our own lives. You were once a very tiny child, but you were a son, then, as much as you are now. So is it with you who have only just begun to believe in Christ—He has given you authority and right to become sons of God. Very early in our life, our father went down to the registrar's office and wrote our name in the roll as his sons. We do not remember that, it was so long ago, but he did it and he also wrote our name in the Family Bible, even as our Father in Heaven has enrolled our names in the Lamb's Book of Life! You recollect that, as a child, you did not go into the kitchen to dine with the servants, but you took your seat at the table. It was a very little chair in which you first sat at the table, but, as you grew bigger, you always went to the table, because you were a son.

The servants in the house were much bigger than you and they could do a great many things that you could not do, and your father paid them wages. He never paid you any—they were not his sons—but you were. If they had put on your clothes, they would not have been his sons. You had privileges that they had not. I remember that, in the parish where my home was, on a certain day in the year, the Church bell rang and everybody went to receive a penny roll. Every child had one and I remember having mine. I claimed it as a privilege because I was my father's son. I think there were six of us, who all had a roll—every child in the parish had one. So there are a number of privileges that come to us very early in our Christian life, and we mean to have them, first, because our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the right to have them and, next, because if we do not take what He bought for us, it will be robbing Him and wasting His substance! As He has paid for it all and has given us the right to have it, let us take it!

You were put in school because you were a son. You did not like it. I daresay that you would rather have stayed at home at play. And you had a touch of the rod, sometimes, because you were a son. That was one of your privileges, "for what son is he whom the father chastens not?" One day you were in the street with other boys, doing wrong, and your father came along and punished

you. He did not touch your companions, for they were not his sons. You smile at those little things, but you did not, at the time, count your punishments as privileges—but they were. When the chastening of the Lord comes, call it a privilege, for that is what it is! There is no greater mercy that I know of on earth than good health unless it is sickness—and that has often been a greater mercy to me than health!

It is a good thing to be without a trouble, but it is a better thing to have a trouble and know how to get Grace enough to bear it. I am not so much afraid of the devil when he roars, as I am when he pretends to be asleep. I think that, oftentimes, a roaring devil keeps us awake—and the troubles of this life stir us up to go to God in prayer—and that which looks to us as bad turns to our good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." III. Now I come to my last point, that is, A MATTER WHICH IS MYSTERIOUS. We are not only given the status of children and the privilege of being called sons, but this mysterious matter is one of heavenly birth— "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

This new birth is absolutely necessary. If we are ever to be numbered among God's children, we must be born again! Born from above. We were born in sin, born children of wrath, even as others—to be God's children, it is absolutely necessary that we should be born again!

The change worked thereby is wonderfully radical. It is not a mere outside washing, nor any touching up and repairing. It is a total renovation. Born again? I cannot express to you all that the change means, it is so deep, so thorough, so complete.

It is also intensely mysterious. What must it be to be born again? "I cannot understand it." Says one. Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel and he did not understand it. Does anybody understand it? Does anybody understand his first birth? What do we know of it? And this second birth? Some of us have passed through it and know that we have, and remember well the pangs of that birth, yet we cannot describe the movements of the Spirit of God by which we were formed anew, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, according to that Word from Him who sits on the Throne, "Behold, I make all things new!" It is a great mystery.

Certainly it is entirely superhuman. We cannot contribute to it. Man cannot make himself to be born again. His first birth is not of himself and his second birth is not one jot more so. It is a work of the Holy Spirit, a work of God! It is a new creation—it is a quickening—it is a miracle from beginning to end!

Here is the point to which I call your special attention, it is assuredly ours. Many of us here have been born again. We know that we have and herein lies the evidence of it, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If you believe on Christ's name, you are born of God! If you have received Christ into your soul, you have obtained that birth that comes not of blood, nor of the will of parents, nor of the will of man, but of God! You have passed from death unto life!

Let no man sit down here and cover his face, and say, "There is no hope for me. I cannot understand about this new birth." If you will take Christ, to have and to hold, henceforth and forever, as your ONLY trust and confidence, you have received that which no line of ancestors

could ever give you, for it is "not of blood." You possess that which no will of the father and mother could ever give you, for it is, "not of the will of the flesh." You have that which your own will could not bring you, for it is, "not of the will of man." You have that which only the Giver of Life can bestow, for it is, "of God!" You are born again, for you have received Christ and believed on His name. I do not urge you to look within, to try and see whether this new birth is there. Instead of looking within yourself, look to Him who hangs on yonder Cross, dying, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Fix your eyes on Him and believe in Him. And when you see in yourself much that is evil, look to Him. And when doubts prevail, look to Him. And when your conscience tells you of your past sins, look to Him!

I have to go through this story almost every day of the year and sometimes half a dozen times in a day. If there is a despairing soul anywhere within 20 miles, it will find me out, no matter whether I am at home, or at Mentone, or in any other part of the world! It will come from any distance, broken down, despairing, half insane, sometimes, and I have no medicine to prescribe except, "Christ, Christ, Christ—Jesus Christ and Him crucified! Look away from yourselves and trust in Him!" I go over and over and over with this and never get one jot further. Because I find that this medicine cures all soul sicknesses, while human quackery cures none! Christ alone is the one remedy for sin-sick souls! Receive Him! Believe on His name! We keep hammering at this. I can sympathize with Luther when he said, "I have preached justification by faith so often, and I feel, sometimes, that you are so slow to receive it, that I could almost take the Bible and bang it into your heads!" I am afraid that the Truth of God would not have entered their hearts if he had done so. This is what we aim at—to get this one thought into a man, "You are lost and, therefore, such an One as Christ came to save."

One said to me just lately, "Oh, Sir, I am the biggest sinner that ever lived!" I replied, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "But I have not any strength." "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died." "Oh, but," he said, "I have been utterly ungodly." "Christ died for the ungodly." "But I am lost." "Yes," I said, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of man has come to save that which was lost."

I said to this man, "You have the brush in your hand and at every stroke it looks as if you are quoting Scripture. You seem to be making yourself out to be the very man that Christ came to save! If you were to make yourself out to be good and excellent, I would give you this word—Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He did not die for the good, but for the bad. He gave Himself for our sins—He never gave Himself for our righteousness. He is a Savior. He has not come, yet, as a Rewarder of the righteous—that will be in His Second Advent. Now He comes as the great Forgiver of the guilty and the only Savior of the lost. Will you come to Him in that way?"

"Oh, but," my friend said, "I have nothing to bring to Christ." "No," I said, "I know that you have not—but Christ has everything." "Sir," he said, "you do not know me, otherwise you would not talk to me like this." And I said, "No, and you do not know yourself—for you are worse than you think you are, though you think that you are bad enough in all conscience. But be you as bad as you may, Jesus Christ came on purpose to lift up from the dunghill those whom He sets among princes by His free, rich, Sovereign Grace."

Oh, come and believe in Him, poor Sinner! I feel that if I had all your souls, I would believe in Christ for their salvation! I would trust Him to save a million souls if I had them, for He is mighty to save! There can be no limit to His power to forgive! There can be no limit to the merit of His precious blood! There can be no boundary to the efficacy of His plea before the Throne of God! Only trust Him and you will be saved! May His gracious Spirit lead you to do so now, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

John 1:1-34

May the Holy Spirit, who inspired these Words, inspire us through them as we read them!

Verse 1. In the beginning was the Word. The Divine Logos, whom we know as the Christ of God. "In the beginning was the Word." The first words of this Gospel remind us of the first words of the Old Testament— "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth." Even then "the Word" Was—He existed before all time, even from everlasting.

1. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. I know not how the Deity of Christ can be more plainly declared than in His eternal duration. He is from the beginning. In His glory He was "with God." In His Nature He "was God."

2. The same was in the beginning with God. As we have been singing—

"Before sin was born, or Satan fell,"

before there was a creation that could fall, "the same was in the beginning with God."

3. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. He that hung upon the Cross was the Maker of all worlds. He that came as an Infant, for our sake, was the Infinite. How low He stooped! How high He must have been that He could stoop so low!

4. In His was life. Essentially, Eternally. 4, 5. And the light was the light of men. And the light shines in dark

ness; and the darkness comprehended it not. It never has done so; it never will. You may sometimes call the darkness, the ignorance of men, or the sin of men. If you like, you may call it the wisdom of men and the righteousness of men, for that is only another form of the same darkness. "The light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. How very different is the style of this verse from the one that precedes it! How grand, how sublime, are the Evangelist's words when he speaks of Jesus! How truly human he becomes, how he dips his pen in ordinary ink when he writes, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." Yet that was a noble testimony to the herald of Christ. John the Baptist was "a man sent from God." 7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. Dear Friends, if you and I know our real destiny and are the servants of God, we are sent that men might, through us, believe in Jesus. John was a special witness, but we ought all to be witnesses to complete the chain of testimony. Every Christian should reckon that he is sent from God to bear witness to the great Light, that, through Him, men might believe.

8, 9. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light that was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world. There was no light from John except what he reflected from his Lord. All the Light of God comes from Jesus. Every man who comes into the world with any Light borrows his Light from Christ. There is no other Light— there can be no other. He is the "Light of the World."

10. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. This is a sad verse. He was a stranger in His own house! He was unknown amidst His own handiwork. Men whom He had made, made nothing of Him. "The world knew Him not"—did not recognize Him.

11. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. That favored circle, the Jewish nation, where Revelation had been given—even there, there was no place for Him. He must be despised and rejected even by His own nation!

12, 13. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. To receive Christ, a man must be born of God. It is the simplest thing in all the world, one would think, to open the door of the heart and let Him in— but no man lets Christ into his heart till, first, God has made him to be born again—born from above.

14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of Grace and Truth. They who saw Christ on earth were highly privileged, but it is a spiritual sight of Him that is to be desired—and even now we can have that! How full of Grace, how full of Truth He is to all those who are privileged to behold Him!

15, 16. John bore witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace. I wish that we could all say that. Even out of this company, many can say it and, linking our hands with those who have gone before us, and those who are still with us in the faith, we say unitedly, "Of His fullness have we all received," and we hope to receive from it, again, tonight, for it is still His fullness! There is never a trace of declining in Him. It was fullness when the first sinner came to Him and it is still fullness—it will be fullness to the very end. "And Grace for Grace." We get Grace to reach out to another Grace, each Grace becoming a steppingstone to something higher! I do not believe in our rising on the "steppingstones of our dead selves." They are poor stones—they all lead downwards. The steppingstones of the living Christ lead upwards! Grace for Grace, Grace upon Grace, till Grace is crowned with Glory!

17. For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. We know that the Law came by Moses. The Law has often burdened us, crushed us, convinced us, condemned us. Let us be equally clear that Grace and the Truth of God come by this Divine channel, "Jesus Christ."

18. No man has seen God at any time; the onlybegotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. We do not need to see God apart from Christ. I am perfectly satisfied to see the Eternal Light through His own chosen Medium, Christ Jesus. Apart from that Medium, the light might blind my eyes! "No man has seen God at any time." Who can look on the sun? What mind can look on God? But Christ does not hide the Father—He manifests Him. "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."

19 23. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you the Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who are you? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice—not, "I am the Word," but—I am the voice." Christ is the essential Word—we are but the voice to make that Word of God sound across the desert of human life.

23. Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. You see, even as a voice, John was not original. That straining after originality of which we see so much of today, finds no warrant among the true servants of God. Even though John is only a voice, yet he is a voice that quotes the Scriptures: "Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah." The more of Scripture we can voice, the better. Our words, what are they? They are but air. His Word, what is it? It is, "Grace and Truth." May we continually be lending a voice to the great Words of God that have gone before!

24 27. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who, coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoelace I am not worthy to unloose. Ah, Dear Friends, although it was a lowly expression that John used, you and I often feel that we need something that goes even lower than that! What are we worthy to do for Christ? Yet there are times when, if there is a shoelace to be unloosed, we are too proud to stoop to do it! When there is something to be done that will bring no honor to us, we are too high and mighty to do it! O child of God, if you have ever been in that condition, be greatly ashamed of yourself! John was first in his day, the morning star of the Light of the Gospel, yet even he felt that he was not worthy to do the least thing for Christ. Where shall you and I put ourselves? Paul said that he was "less than the least of all the saints." He ran away with a title that might have been very appropriate for us. Well, we must let him have it, I suppose, and we must try to find another like it. But if we cannot find suitable words, God help us to have the humble feeling, which is better still!

28, 29. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world! John preached a sacrificial Savior, a sin-bearing Savior, a sin-atoning Savior. You and I have nothing else to preach. Let each of us say—

"Tis all my business here below To cry, Behold the Lamb!"

30, 31. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not. Although John knew the Savior, personally, he did not know Him officially. He had a token given to him by God, by which he was to know the Messiah, and he did not officially know Him till he had that token fulfilled.

31 33. But that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which

baptizes with the Holy Spirit. John could not know of his own judgment. No doubt he was morally certain that Jesus was the Christ. He had been brought up with Him. He knew His mother, he had heard of His wondrous birth. John and Jesus must have been together often, but he was not to use his own judgment in this case, but to wait for the sign from Heaven. And until he witnessed it, he did not say a word about it. When he saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Him, then he knew that it was even He!

34. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Hear you, then, the witness of John! The Christ, who came from Nazareth to be baptized of him in Jordan, He on whom the Holy Spirit descended like a dove—"this is the Son of God." This is the sin-bearing Lamb! Oh, that you and I might fulfill John's expectation, for he spoke that we might believe. He, being dead, yet speaks! May we believe his witness and be assured that "this is the Son of God!"

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John 1,12 #1757 - The New Year's Guest

THE NEW YEAR'S GUEST

NO. 1757

A SERMON PREACHED ON LORDS-DAY AFTERNOON,

DECEMBER 16, 1883,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT MENTONE, BEFORE THE COMMUNION,

TO A SMALL COMPANY OF BELIEVERS.

"I was a stranger, and you took Me in."

Matthew 25:35.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become

the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

John 1:12.

I LATELY received a New Year's card which suggested to me the topic on which I am about to speak to you. The designer of the card has, with holy insight, seen the relation of the two texts to each other and rendered both of them eminently suggestive by placing them together. There is freshness in the thought that, by receiving Jesus as a stranger, our believing hospitality works in us a Divine capacity and we thereby receive power to become the sons of God. The connection suggested between the two Inspired words is really existent and by no means strained or fanciful, as you will see by reading the context of the passage in John—"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." So He was a stranger in the world which He Himself had made! "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." So He was a stranger among the people whom He had set apart for His own by many deeds of mercy! "But as many as received Him"—that is to say, gave entertainment to this blessed Stranger—"to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

I thought that this might prove to be a suitable and salutary passage to discourse upon at the beginning of a New Year, for this is a season of hospitality and some among our friends will think it well to commence a New Year by saying to the Lord Jesus, "Come in, You blessed of the Lord; why do You stand outside?" This Divine stranger has knocked at many doors till His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night. And now I trust there are some who will rise up and open unto Him so that at the end of the year they may say with Job, "The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveler." Verily, in so do

Volume 30 1ing, you will not only entertain angels unawares, but you will be receiving the Lord of angels!

The day in which you receive Him shall be the beginning of years to you—it shall be the first of a series of years which, whether they are few or many, shall be, each one, in the best sense happy! I would say a few words, first, about the Stranger taken in and then, about the Stranger making strangers into sons.

I. THE STRANGER TAKEN IN—this is a simile given to us by our Lord, Himself—a royal metaphor presented to us from His own Throne. Note that the passage begins, "I was hungry and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty and you gave Me drink." These are two good works which prove faith in Jesus and love of Him and, therefore, they are accepted, recorded and rewarded. But it is a distinct and memorable growth when it comes to, "I was a stranger, and you took Me in." A place to stay is a larger gift than refreshment at the door. It is good, believingly, to do anything for Christ, however small, but it is a much better thing to give entertainment to Jesus within our souls, admitting Him into our minds and hearts.

We have not come to the full of what our Lord has a right to expect of us until we have given from our stores to Him by benefiting His poor and aiding His cause—then we deliberately open the doors of our entire being to Him and install Him in our souls as an honored Guest! We must not be satisfied with giving Him cups of cold water, or morsels of bread, but we must "constrain Him, saying, Abide with us." Our hearts must be as a Bethany, where, like Mary, Martha and Lazarus, we give our Master a grand welcome! Or as the house of Obededom where the Ark of the Lord may dwell in peace. Our prayer must be that of Abraham's, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray You, from Your servant."

The most important word of our text is stranger and its light casts a hue of strangeness over the whole passage. Here are three strange things. The first is, that the Lord Jesus should be a Stranger here below. Is it not a strange thing that, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him," and yet He was a stranger in it? Yet is it not a whit more strange than true, for when He was born there was no room for Him in the inn? Inns had open doors for ordinary strangers, but not for Him, for He was a greater Stranger than any around Him. It was Bethlehem of David, the seat of the ancient family to which He belonged, but alas, He had become "a Stranger unto His brethren, and an alien unto His mother's children"! And no door was opened unto Him.

Soon there was no safe room for Him in the village, itself, for Herod the king sought the young Child's life and He must flee into Egypt, to be a Stranger in a strange land and worse than a stranger—an exile and a fugitive from the land where, by birthright, He was king! On His return and in His public appearing, there was still no room for Him among the mass of the people. He came to His own Israel—to whom Prophets had revealed Him and types had set Him forth—but they would have none of Him. "He was despised and rejected of men." He was the Man "whom men abhorred," whom they so much detested that they cried, "Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Yes, the world so little knew Him that they must necessarily hang up the Lord of Glory on a Cross and put "the Holy One and the Just" to a felon's death! Jew and Gentile alike conspired to prove how truly He was a stranger—the Jew said, "As for this Fellow, we know not from where He is." And the Roman asked Him, "Where are You from?"

Now, that Christ should be such a Stranger was, indeed, a sadly singular thing, and yet we need not wonder, for how should a wicked, selfish world know Jesus or receive Him? The Lord's own had been forewarned of this in ancient type, for long before the Lord appeared in the flesh, He had shown Himself as a Stranger to the faithful. He came in angelic form to Abraham and thus we read the story—"And he lifted up his eyes and looked and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray you, from Your servant: Let a little water, I pray You, be fetched, and wash Your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort you your hearts."

The Lord, who stands out in the center of the three, was a Stranger, and the father of the faithful entertained Him, in type of what all the faithful of every age will do. This is He of whom Jeremiah said, "O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night?" Yet with this fair warning, it still remains sadly singular that, coming on an errand of mercy, our Lord should find so scant a welcome; should be so little known; so seldom recognized, so harshly entreated. Truly as Egypt made Israel to serve with rigor, so have we made this patient Stranger to serve with our sins and wearied Him with our iniquities.

The Son of Man had not where to lay His head. Luke says the barbarians showed Paul and his friends no little kindness—but men were worse than barbarians to their Savior! Shall the servant be better treated than his master, or the disciple than his Lord? "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not." Another strange thing is that we should be able to receive the Lord Jesus as a stranger. He has gone into Glory and will He always say of us, "I was a stranger and you took Me in"? Yes, He will say so, if we render to Him that spiritual hospitality of which He here speaks.

This can be done in several ways. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, for such I trust you are, we can receive Christ as a stranger when Believers are few and despised in any place. We may sojourn where worldliness abounds and religion is at a discount—and it may need some courage to swear our faith in Jesus. Then have we an opportunity of winning the approving word, "I was a stranger, and you took Me in." There is a sure proof of love in receiving our Lord as a stranger. If the Queen desired, again, to visit Mentone, every villa would be gladly placed at her disposal! But were she driven from her empire and reduced to be a poor stranger, hospitality to her would be a greater test of loyalty than it is today.

When Jesus is in low esteem in any place, and He sometimes is so, let us be all the more bold to acknowledge our allegiance to Him. I fear that many professors take their color from their company and are fellows with the irreligious and the unbelieving. These cry, "Hosanna," with the multitude of the Lord's admirers, but in heart they have no love to the Son of God. Our loyalty to Christ must never be a matter of latitude and longitude—we must love Him in every land, honor Him when the multitude disregard Him—and we must speak of Him when all forget Him. Again, we have the Lord's own warrant for saying that if we show brotherly kindness to a poor saint we entertain the Lord, Himself.

If we see Christians in need, or despised and ridiculed and we say, "You are my Brother in Christ. It matters not what garb you wear, the name of Christ is named on you and I suffer with you. I will relieve your needs and share your reproach," then the glorious Lord, Himself, will say to us at the last, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me." It does seem passing strange, though I thus speak, that you and I should still be able to entertain our Lord and yet it is so! We do not wonder that the righteous, with a humble truthfulness exclaim, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You? Or thirsty and gave You drink? When did we see You a stranger and took You in?" Neither are we free from admiring surprise. We also cry, "Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth? Will He accept hospitality at our hands?" It is even so!

Again, we may entertain the Stranger, Christ, by holding fast to His faithful Word when the doctrines taught by Himself and His Apostles are in ill repute. Nowadays the Truth which God has revealed seems of less account with men than their own thoughts and dreams! And they who still believe Christ's faithful Word shall have it said of them, "I was a stranger and you took Me in." When you see the revealed Truth of God, as it were, wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, and no man says a good word for it, then is the hour come to acknowledge it because it is Christ's Truth—and to prove your fidelity by counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt!

Oh, scorn on those who only believe what everybody else believes because they must be in the swim with the majority! These are but dead fish borne of the current and they will be washed away to a shameful end! If living fish swim against the stream, so do living Christians pursue Christ's Truth against the set and current of the times, defying alike the ignorance and the culture of the age! It is the Believer's honor, the chivalry of a Christian, to be the steadfast friend of the Truth of God when all other men have forsaken it. So, also, when Christ's precepts are disregarded, His day forgotten and His worship neglected, we can come in, take up our cross and follow Him—and so receive Him as a stranger.

To be sure, some will say, "Those people are fanatical Methodists, or strait-laced Presbyterians," but what of that? It matters nothing to us what the world thinks of us, for we are crucified to it and it to us! If our Lord has laid down a rule, it is ours to follow it and find rest unto our souls in so doing! Yes, and a special rest in doing it, when by so doing we are securing that blessed sentence, "I was a stranger, and you took Me in." Death, itself, for His sake, would be a small matter if thereby we secured that priceless word!

Once more, that spiritual life which is the innermost receiving of Christ—that new life which no man knows but he that has received it; that quickening of the Spirit which makes the Christian as much superior to ordinary men as men are above dumb, driven cattle—if we receive that blessed gift, then shall we with emphasis be entertaining our Lord as a stranger. Profession is abundant, but the secret life is rare. The name to live is everywhere, but where is the life fully seen? To be rather than to talk; to enjoy rather than to pretend; to have Christ truly within—this is not every man's attainment, but those who have it are among the God-like ones, the true sons of God!

A third strange thing is the fact that Jesus will deign to dwell in our hearts. Such a One as Jesus in such a one as I am? The King of Glory in a sinner's bosom? This is a miracle of Divine Grace, yet the manner of it is simple enough. A humble, repenting faith opens the door and Jesus enters the

heart at once. Love shuts the door with the hand of Penitence and holy Watchfulness keeps out intruders. Thus is the promise made good, "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Meditation, contemplation, prayer, praise and daily obedience keep the house in order for the Lord! And then follows the consecration of our entire nature to His use as a temple—the dedication of spirit, soul, body and all their powers, as holy vessels of the sanctuary! It is the writing of, "Holiness unto the Lord," upon all that is about us till our everyday garments become vestments, our meals sacraments, our life a ministry and ourselves priests unto the Most High! Oh, the supreme condescension of this indwelling! He never dwelt in angels, but He resides in a contrite spirit! There is a world of meaning in the Redeemer's words, "I in them." May we know them as Paul translates them, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

II. A few words must suffice upon THE STRANGER MAKING STRANGERS INTO SONS. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Yes, Beloved, the moment Christ is received into our hearts by faith, we are no more strangers and foreigners, but of the household of God, for the Lord adopts us and puts us among His children! It is a splendid act of Divine Grace, that He should take us, who were heirs of wrath, and make us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ! Such honor have all the saints, even all that believe on His name.

There is more to follow—the designation of sons brings with it a birth into the actual condition of sons. The privilege brings with it the power; the name is backed up and warranted by the nature—for the Spirit of God enters into us, when Christ comes, and causes us to be born again. To be adopted without being born again would be a lame blessing, but when we are both adopted and regenerated then have we the fullness of sonship and the Grace is made perfect towards us. "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And this mysterious birth, which comes with the reception of Christ, makes us free, not only in the kingdom of God, but in the house and the heart of God!

Don't forget that when the Lord Jesus enters our hearts, there springs up between us and Him a living, loving, lasting union which seals our sonship—for as we become one with the Son, we must be sons, also. Jesus puts it, "My Father and your Father." It is the Spirit of His Son in our hearts by which we cry, "Abba, Father." "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." We are unto the Father even as Jesus is, as He says, "You have loved them as You have loved Me." Thus you see that in receiving Jesus, we receive, as the Revised Version puts it, "the right to become the sons of God."

Yet once more—the practical reception of Jesus into the life becomes a proof to ourselves and others that we are the sons of God, for it creates in us a likeness to God which is apparent and unquestionable. For look, although Jehovah, our God, is incomprehensible and Infinite, and His Glory is inconceivable in its splendor, yet this fact we know of Him, that in His bosom lies His Son, with whom He is always well-pleased. When we receive Jesus into our bosom, as one with us, and when our joy and delight are in Him, we do, in that matter, become like the Father. Having thus, with the Father, the same Object of love and delight, we are brought into fellowship with Him and begin to walk in the Light of God as He is in the Light.

A small window will let in the great sun—much more will Jesus, as the blessed meeting place between our souls and God—let in the Life, Light and Love of God into our souls, making us like God! Moreover, having received Jesus as a stranger, we feel a tenderness towards all strangers,

for we see in their condition some resemblance to our own. We have love to all who, like ourselves, are strangers with God and sojourners, as all our fathers were, and thus again we are made like God, of whom it is written, "The Lord preserves the strangers." Our God is "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." Our Lord Jesus, therefore, bade us be the children of our Father which is in Heaven, "For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

By becoming doers of good, we are known as children of the good God. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." A man is a son of God when he lives beyond himself by a thoughtful care for others; when his soul is not confined within the narrow circle of his own ribs, but goes abroad to bless those around him, however unworthy they may be. True children of God never see a lost one without seeking to save him; never hear of misery without longing to bestow comfort. "You know the heart of a stranger," said the Lord to Israel. And so do we, for we were once captives, ourselves, and even now our choicest Friend is still a stranger, for whose sake we love all suffering men.

When Christ is in us, we search out opportunities for bringing prodigals, strangers and outcasts to the great Father's house. Our love goes out to all mankind and our hands are closed against none if it is so that we are made like God, as little children are like their father. Oh, sweet result of entertaining the Son of God by faith! He dwells in us and we gaze upon Him in holy fellowship so that, "we all with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

"Love is of God and everyone that loves is born of God and knows God." May we daily feel the power of Jesus within our hearts, transforming our whole character and making us to be more and more manifestly the children of God! When our Lord asks, concerning us, "What manner of men were they?" may even His enemies and ours be compelled to answer, "As You are, so were they—each one resembled the children of a King." Then shall Jesus be admired in all them that believe, for men shall see in the children, the Divine Stranger's handiwork.

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Chapter 62

John 1,12 #669 - Open Heart for the Great Savior

OPEN HEART

FOR THE GREAT SAVIOR

NO. 669

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 17, 1865,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become

the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:

who were born, not of blood,

nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

John 1:12.

DIVINE Truth is one, but it is many-sided. When you have looked at it from one point of view you may reverse your position, and, though the Truth at which you look will be the same, you will marvel at its freshness as seen from another aspect. This morning we sought to show you how Jesus Christ received sinners [Volume 11, Sermon #665—Open House for All Comers.] Tonight it shall be our endeavor, as the Holy Spirit may enable us, to set forth how sinners receive Christ.

It is perfectly true that the work of salvation lies first and mainly in Jesus receiving sinners to Himself to pardon, to cleanse, to sanctify, to preserve, to make perfect. But, at the same time the sinner also receives Christ. There is an act on the sinner's part by which, being constrained by Divine Grace, he opens his heart to the admission of Jesus Christ and Jesus enters in and dwells in the heart, and reigns and rules there. To a gracious readiness of heart to entertain the Friend who knocks at the door, we are brought by God the Holy Spirit, and then He sups with us and we with Him.

We shall take, tonight, the view of the subject opened up before us by this text. We shall begin by simply and shortly describing how the sinner receives Christ. Secondly, the privilege, or power, which is conferred as the result of this reception of Christ. And thirdly, the great change which is involved in the fact that the sinner has received Christ, the fact that the sinner has been born again from above, "not of the will of man, but of God."

I. As briefly, then, as may be, and very simply, indeed, we will describe WHAT IT IS FOR THE SINNER TO RECEIVE CHRIST. This receiving Christ lies in several things. If a man would receive Christ he must, first of all, receive Him in His Person as He is revealed in the Sacred Scriptures.

We are taught over and over again in Scripture that Jesus Christ is Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, Jehovah's equal in fashion as a man.

The "WORD"—that "Word" of which it is said, "the Word was God"—was "made manifest" in flesh among men, and they "beheld His glory." Though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet "He made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." This was a new and startling doctrine when first preached to heathen sages, that God should take humanity into so intimate a connection with Himself, as really and truly to be Man and God in the same Person.

But it is a doctrine which must be received by you or else you cannot receive Christ. My Master will not be satisfied with the acknowledgment that His Character is lovely, His doctrine pure, and His moral teaching super-excellent. He will not be content with your admission that He is a Prophet greater than any Prophet that ever came before or after Him. He will not rest satisfied with your admission that He is a teacher sent from Heaven, and a Being who, on account of His virtues, is now peculiarly exalted in Heaven.

All this is well, but it is not enough! You must also believe that He, who as Man was born of the Virgin, and was dandled upon her lap at Bethlehem, was as God none other than the everlasting Lord, without beginning of days or end of years. You do not receive Christ in very deed and truth unless you believe in His proper humanity and actual Godhead. Indeed, what is there for you to receive if you do not receive this? A Savior who is not Divine can be no Savior for us! How can a mere man, however eminent, deliver his fellows from sins such as yours and mine? How can he bear the burden of our guilt any more than we can ourselves bear it, if there is no more about him than about any other singularly virtuous man?

An angel would stagger beneath the load of human criminality, and much more would this be the case with even a perfect man. It needed those mighty shoulders—"Which bear the earth's huge pillars up," to sustain the weight of human sin, and carry it into the wilderness of forgetfulness! You must receive Christ, in order to be saved by Him, as being God though man. But, my dear Friends, the mere belief of this doctrine will not save anybody! There are many persons who have no need to fear the curses of the Athanasian Creed, nor the test of any other dogmatic way of expressing the fact of the Deity of Christ. But they are, nevertheless, very far from having received Christ Jesus Himself! A man may believe another to be a clever physician, and yet if he has a personal objection to him, he may refuse to receive him as such.

If a man would receive Jesus rightly, he must, in the next place, accept Him in all His offices. Our blessed Lord has three main offices. We find Him spoken of as "Prophet," "Priest," and "King," and men must be willing to take Him in each and all of the three. As a "Prophet" He teaches—what He has received of God He manifests to man. Am I willing to abide by His teaching? Do I take His words, and the words which He delivered by His Apostles, as being my directory and rule? I have a certain "doxy" which some call, "heterodoxy," but which, perhaps, I think to be "orthodoxy." Can I sincerely say that Jesus Christ is the Dictator of my orthodoxy?

Do I take Him and His teaching to be the Truth by which I will abide? I find one Church holding one creed, and another Church holding another. Do I look at all these standards of faith, and say of them, "I will follow them as far as they follow Christ, but neither to cardinal, bishop, synod, nor

presbytery will I yield my faith"? I must first know whether the teaching of these men is in accordance with the teaching of Him whom I take to be my Master and my Teacher. Whether you are Calvinists, or Arminians, or anything else, dear Friends, be first and chiefly Christians—Christians following Christ—receiving Him as the great Expositor to you of God, and of the great Truths of Revelation.

You will tell me you have your "bodies of divinity." There never was but one "body of divinity," and that was the "body" of the Man, Christ Jesus! Do you, abating all prejudices and self-formed opinions, receive our Lord as the great embodiment of Truth? The truest and the best system of theology is Jesus Christ! If you learn Him you have all Truth—you have nothing in excess, and nothing is omitted. He is the mold of Truth into which your prepared mind must be delivered to receive form and shape from His perfect wisdom. Our hearts must receive Him as the Truth of God—

"You are the Truth, Your Word alone True wisdom can impart. To You I yield a willing mind, And open all my heart."

If I receive Jesus as "Prophet," I must also take Him as "Priest." Herein, indeed, mainly lies His work. He came to purify men from sin. He stood before God offering a sacrifice of propitiation by which the guilt of man is removed. If I am not willing to receive Him as an atoning sacrifice, it is in vain for me to esteem Him as an exemplar. His Cross of Atonement is inseparable from Himself. We must not only glory in Christ but in Him Crucified, or else we shall surely be led forth with His enemies. Jesus must be my only ground of confidence for pardon. I must leave all human priests. I must have done with all trusting in priest-craft in any shape or form, whether it is in the Popish, Anglican, or any other fashion.

I must neither make myself a priest, nor look upon any other man as being priest for me. I must look upon Jesus Christ as being the only Priest in whom I confide—for, mark you—my Master claims the sole prerogative of priesthood and He only permits us, His people, to hold it as being in Him. And then we all, without exception, can say—"He has made us kings and priests unto God." But any special form of priesthood, peculiar to a certain class, is as alien to the spirit of Christianity as any dogma can possibly be. Every regenerated man becomes a priest by virtue of his union with Christ Jesus. But out of this union, it is treason to think of priesthood.

You have not received Christ as the truly regenerated children of God have received Him unless you have accepted Him as the Anointed of God, the only Priest in whom to trust for the salvation of your soul—

"I other priests disclaim, And laws, and offerings, too. None but the bleeding Lamb The mighty work can do. He shall have all the praise, for He Has loved, and lived, and died for me."

If I yield to the Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet and Priest, I must also give Him allegiance as my "King." He will reign where He purifies. He is not content to teach me, but He will also govern me. What do you say, my Hearers? Will you give yourself up, body and soul, to be ruled absolutely by Christ? Shall His Laws be binding upon your conscience and carried out in your life?

Do you say now, as before the Searcher of all hearts—"I desire in everything to be guided by Him, to submit myself to His absolute control"? You cannot really and truly receive the Savior unless

you are willing to do this. God has not sent His Son to be the messenger of sin! He will forgive your past offenses, but you must in the future submit yourselves to His gentle sway. "Kiss the Son," is one of the first Gospel commands—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the Way when His wrath is kindled but a little." Remember the doom of those men who said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us."

Take His easy yoke. Bow before His Throne of love. Touch the silver scepter of His Divine Grace. "He is your Lord, and worship Him." Crown Him in the palace of your soul and set Him on the throne of your affections, for He is the King of angels and should be the King of men—

"My King supreme, to You I bow, A willing subject at Your feet. All other Lords I disavow, And to Your government submit. My Savior King this heart would love, And imitate the blest above."

Can we, dear Friends, thus accept Christ tonight, as Prophet, Priest, and King? If not, it is idle to talk about receiving Jesus Christ—we do not know Him—and are not known of Him! Our Lord is not to be divided and parceled out. You must have Him altogether or not at all. You must admit Him in all His offices, or He will not come under your roof.

But a man may agree to all this and yet not receive Christ! All this is necessary as a steppingstone, but we must go on to something more. I must receive Jesus Christ as being all this to me. I must give myself to Him and take Him as mine, as having near relationship to me and influence upon me. Another man's Christ will not save you. He must be your Christ. You have been accustomed to go to a place of worship and you think, perhaps, "Well, I have gone with the rest, and therefore it is all right with me." And when you have heard a sermon it has been addressed to the congregation in the plural and you have been content to get a little share of it, but a very little one, indeed.

Now, you have never heard aright unless the Truth has come to you in the singular number, as to you alone. The gate of salvation is too narrow for two persons to go through arm-in-arm. You must all singly and separately pass the portal of Eternal Life just as you did the portal of natural life. You must feel not only that such and such things are true, but that they are true to you. If you receive our dear Redeemer as a Prophet, He begins to exercise that office by telling you that you are naturally lost, ruined, and undone. Do you believe this? Do you believe it to be true of you—not of chimney-sweeps, not of streetwalkers, not only of thieves in prison, but of you—that you are condemned under the Law of God? Do you take home the doctrine of the Fall, and of the depravity of human nature as being true to you?

He tells you, next, that the only way to remove your sin is by His precious blood. Has that blood any reference to you? Have you trusted it? Has it washed you from sin? You have not taken the Lord Jesus as a Priest unless you have believed in His blood as presenting a propitiation for your sins, and as cleansing you before the holy Presence of the Most High God. You have not truly accepted Jesus as King unless you have personally submitted yourself to Him. In everything else people are so selfish that nothing but personal possession will content them! Why are they not thus careful in religious matters?

They do not rejoice in the gold in the bank cellars—they aspire to have a good account at their own bank account. They do not consider themselves fed because there may happen to be a fine dinner provided at the London Tavern—they wish to see a feast on their own tables. But in eternal

matters of infinitely more importance, men are, alas, so satisfied with generalities. "Yes! Oh yes, we are a Christian nation." Wonderfully so! "Of course, we, as a family always go to a place of worship. We are not heathens! We were born in a Christian land." A "Christian land." It is, we must all admit, a very Christian land!

Very Christian, indeed! Look at our gin palaces and our divorce courts! But what of that? How can national religion content private conscience any more than national wealth can console personal poverty? Still, the most of men care so little about their souls that they are satisfied with generalities! They do not come to particulars, to personalities. Why should they be so particular in other matters and not in religion? Why seek a personal interest in gold and land and estates, and then leave Heaven and the eternal world to be matters of universal speculation? You have not received Christ truly if you have not gripped Him with your own hands and claimed Him as your own!

You must get right hold of Him for yourselves. There is no receiving a thing unless the thing received is held by the receiver. Water is poured into a vessel and anything received is contained within the thing receiving it. So Christ Jesus must come right into you, into personal, conscious relationship with your own spirit so as to act upon you and influence you or else you have not received Him! I hope I shall not make what is very plain, very difficult.

One is sometimes afraid, in giving explanations, that one may do what a good Divine did with Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" which he edited with explanatory notes. He went round among his flock and said to one good woman, "Do you understand Mr. Bunyan's Pilgrim?" "Oh yes, Sir," was the answer, "very well, indeed. And I hope that one day I shall be able to understand your explanations." So, perhaps, you will say of me, that you understand the text very well, and you hope that one day you will be able to understand my explanations!

Well, I really do not know how to make it more plain. My desire is to say very distinctly that we must receive the Lord Jesus Christ as a Divine Being—receive Him in all His offices—and receive Him to ourselves in all those offices. The pith and marrow of receiving Christ we find in the next remark: we must trust Him. The true reception of Christ is explained in the text, "Even to them that believe on His name." To "receive" then, is to "believe," or, in other words, to credit, to rely upon, to trust. Now this is the simplest matter in all the world, and yet, by reason of its simplicity, it is the hardest possible act for human nature to perform. So hard, that although faith still remains the act of man, it is an act which he never performs till he receives faith as the gift of God. We do not naturally care for a plan of salvation so simple and devoid of merit—but there it is and we cannot alter it—nor ought we desire to do so. As many as trust Christ, to them He gives power to become the sons of God. The whole act of faith lies in the simple matter of believing that Jesus is God's appointed Savior, and then throwing ourselves upon Him to save us.

You know what trust is in earthly matters. You rely upon a friend in cases of difficulty, and then you do not trouble yourself about the matter any more. A person offers to pay your debts and you go home and consider yourself out of debt—you trust the person. Now Jesus says to you, "I have suffered for the sin of all Believers. God can now forgive sin and yet be a just God. He has punished Me instead of sinners who believe on Me. Trust Me. Rely upon Me and your reliance will be at once evidence to you that I died for you—that I carried your sin—that God punished Me for you. He, therefore, never can punish you because in justice He cannot punish both Substitute and

offender for one and the same sin."

God can never punish Christ for your sin and then lay the sin at your door. He will not send your Substitute to the wars for you and then demand you to go for whom the Substitute has already gone. The act of trusting Jesus Christ is the act which brings a soul into a state of Grace and is the mark and evidence of our being bought with the blood of the Lord Jesus. Do you trust Him, dear Hearers? Then, if so, you receive Him. When the soul has thus trusted Christ there comes another form of reception. The outer golden door of faith being first opened, the inner pearly gate of affection is next thrown open. They who trust Christ, love Christ—

"Sure I must love, or are my ears Still deaf, nor will my passions move? Lord! Melt this flinty heart to tears— This heart shall yield to death or love."

I do not love Christ first, and then trust Him. I, in the dawn of spiritual life, trust Him to save me. I find He does save me and I then love Him because He first loved me. I trust Him to deliver me out of the bondage of my daily sins. And then I find that I am stronger against those sins than I ever was before—that I can tread a corruption under foot when I trust Jesus, which I could not battle with before I trusted Him. I find He really does come to my rescue, and therefore I then say to him, "I love You, O my Helper and Friend." And from that time on Jesus Christ lives in my heart!

We cannot help using expressions such as, "Christ living in us," "Jesus formed in us," and the like, when talking about these things. And to spiritual men they are very simple, but to the carnal mind they are very difficult. Let us in a word expound them. Just as when a man is attached to a certain friend, that friend is said to, "live in his heart." So Jesus lives in the hearts of His people because they love Him.

And, just as when a man has devoted himself to the pursuit of science, that science fills his soul, lives in his soul, makes an abode of it, makes a kingdom of it where it will rule and reign. So, love to Jesus, faith in Him, and devotion to His cause enter into the soul of the Believer and fill it, and thus that soul receives Him. The first door is the door of simple faith—a door which has been opened in many a sinner's heart by the loving hand of the Holy Spirit—a door, which we pray, may be opened in yours tonight. Oh, how gently does the door of faith turn on its hinges! A babe taught of God may push it open!

You may not understand all the doctrines of the Bible but you can understand this—if you trust in Jesus Christ you will be a son of God! You cannot perform a complex act of an educated mind. Sympathy with poetic imagery and enjoyment of metaphysical refinements are quite beyond you. But if the Holy Spirit teaches you, you will see that the act of faith is not a complex act, but a very simple one, indeed! It is so simple that children of three and four years of age have doubtless been capable of it. And there have been many persons but very little removed from absolute idiocy who have been able to believe.

A doctrine which needs to be reasoned out may require a high degree of mental development—but the simple act of trusting requires nothing of the kind. If you cannot read a letter in a book you may believe this—that God came down from Heaven in the Person of Jesus Christ and suffered for sin Himself that He might forgive sin and yet be just. I wonder that a man can hear it and not believe it! It is an amazing thing that such good news is not at once believed. Let me repeat it, and oh, may the blessed Spirit work faith in you who hear it! God was so just that He

could not forgive sin without violating His Nature! He must award punishment to transgression.

But to make mercy consistent with the severest justice, the Lawgiver came Himself among men and gave His own shoulders to the scourge, and stretched out His own hands to feel the nails, to suffer, bleed, and die! And now if you trust God in the Person of Christ, and do rely upon Him to put away your sin. And if you take Him from now on to be your King and Ruler, you shall be saved! God be thanked that we have so simple a Gospel to preach and may the Lord bring many to receive it, that they may become His sons!

II. We now turn to THE GREAT PRIVILEGE, which is said in the text to be given to those who trust in the Son of God. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." The word "power" here may be translated "privilege," and one of the older commentators and translators renders it "honor." "To them gave He the honor to become the sons of God." Now, what is it to be a "son of God"? This theme demands a seraph to discourse upon it! Yes, even an archangel might fail to describe what it is to be a son of God!

Certainly it is a point of dignity beyond what any angel ever attained. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son, this day have I begotten you?" But every man, woman, and child that believes in Jesus Christ is from that time on a child of God. You know what it is to be the son of a good man and true, and some of you would not willingly renounce your birthright. You claim from your father a child's privileges. You expect, that being a son, you shall inherit certain rights, and those rights you will duly receive. If I could stand here tonight and say I were a king's son, many would be wonderfully envious. But what do you say to this—I claim to be one of the sons of God? Does no man's heart aspire to this felicity? Are there no spirits which pine for this dignity? Oh, the stolid baseness which does not rise to a desire after this glory! Do not suppose that when we say "son of God," we merely use a metaphor without meaning! No, every person who believes in Christ Jesus is entitled to all rights and privileges which go with son-ship relationship in any case, but which emphatically go with son-ship in the case of a son of God!

What, then, are we entitled to, and what do we receive? A complete list I cannot attempt to make out for you, but as my mind suggests the gifts of adoption, they shall come before you. If we are the sons of God, we are dearly beloved of God. Did you ever try to get that thought into your mind, that God loves you? I can understand that God pities me—that is a feeling which so vastly superior a Being might well feel to so inferior an existence—but that He loves me is scarcely conceivable, although it is most sure and certain! Who can drink this well dry? Who can bear home this fruitful sheaf of delights, this purple cluster of Eshcol?

Sons of God are loved of their Father with a love surpassing thought! They are, indeed, intimately related as well as dearly loved. There is a union between God and His sons. There is the same Nature in the son as there is in the Father, for we become "partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." These are no words of mine, but of the Holy Spirit! One would not have dared to have uttered them if inspiration had not made them ready to our hand. We are most near and dear to the blessed God who fills all in all. Being sons we are graciously treated. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." "He spares them as a man spares his own son that serves him." Goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Being sons, again, we are wisely educated. Parents do not think they have done their duty unless they bring their children up to understand knowledge, and to be fitted to take their part with full grown men. We are trained in the school of God. We receive chastisement and are made to smart under His rod. We read in the illuminated Book of His Grace, and are "made meet," when fully educated, "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." There is no school like that in which love is the head master. As children we are admitted to a familiarity which servants cannot know. A child may say and do to his father what no stranger could.

God manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant. We have access to God at all hours! The Father's door is never locked against His much-loved children. Our cry He knows even as a father knows his child's cry from every other sound. All our needs are provided for, and our Father's loving heart watches over all our wanderings and forgives all our offenses. Remember that a father's relationship is one which cannot be suspended. I know the old proverb says, "A father's a father till he gets a new wife," which implies that he is not afterwards, but that only means as to his actions, for he must be a father always. He cannot break off that relationship. He must cease to be before he can cease to be a father so long as his children live. When I have heard people say that you may be a child of God one day and a child of the devil the next, I have felt inclined to buy them a dictionary so that they might know the meaning of the word "father." What a mistake! What a misuse of words do they commit! If I am my father's child I am so, and there is no power, human or Divine—I speak with reverence—that can disown me!

Adoption might cease to operate, but birth, never! I must be the child of him that begat me. And so, if I am a child of God, begotten unto God by the incorruptible seed of His Word, there is no power, infernal or Divine, that can possibly rob me, as a child of God, of this privilege! As a child I am, and a child I must be. So then, we have honorable standing, safe, abiding, blessed inheritance, and perfected education all belonging—to whom? Why, to as many as receive Christ! That is, to as many as trust Him! Poor trembling Soul, why should not you be in that number?

III. The third point was to be, THE GREAT WORK, WHICH IS NECESSARILY INVOLVED IN THIS ACT OF RECEIVING CHRIST. Every man who trusts the Lord Jesus has been born again. The question was once argued in an assembly of Divines as to whether a person first had faith or regeneration, and it was suggested that it was a question which must forever be unanswerable. The process, if such it is, must be simultaneous—no sooner does the Divine life come into the soul than it believes on Christ. You might as well ask whether in the human body there is first the circulation of the blood or the heaving of the lungs—both are essential ingredients in life, and must come at the same time.

If I believe in Jesus Christ I need not ask any question as to whether I am regenerated, for no unregenerate person ever could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! And if regenerated I must believe in Jesus, for he who does not do so is clearly dead in sin. See, then, the folly of persons talking about being regenerated who have no faith! It cannot be! It is impossible! We can have no knowledge of such a thing as regeneration which is not accompanied with some degree of mental motion and consciousness.

Regeneration is not a thing which takes place upon matter—it is a thing of spirit. The birth of the spirit must be the subject of consciousness, and though a man may not be able to say that at such and such a moment he was regenerated, yet the act of faith is a consciousness of regeneration. The moment I believe in Jesus Christ my faith is an index to me of a work that has gone on within. And the secret work within, and the open act of faith which God has joined together let no man put asunder. Those who believe not are unregenerate, though they may have been sprinkled by the best priest who ever had Episcopal hands laid on his head!

If a man believes not he is unregenerate, whether baptized or not. But if he believes, he is regenerate, though he may never have been baptized at all. Baptism may outwardly express regeneration after it has been received, and then the symbol becomes valuable—but without faith there can be no regeneration, even though Baptism is administered a thousand times!

Observe what kind of new birth it is which all Believers have received. It is one which comes "not of bloods," (so the original has it). Neither by the blood of circumcision, nor of the Passover, nor especially by the blood of descent. Sin runs in the blood, if you will, but Divine Grace does not. We are not born Christians by the mere fact of our being the children of godly Christian people. Neither are we born Christians "of the will of man." The best men in the world cannot create us anew—if they pray for us ever so much—the power of their will apart from the will of God cannot avail.

We are not born "of the will of the flesh," that is to say, our own free will does not cause it. If a man could will himself into a state of newness of heart, the fact of his being willing to be in such a state would, I suppose, be evidence of his being in that state already—but the human will is powerless in itself to produce regeneration. We must be born again from above! The Holy Spirit must, by His Divine energy, enter into us and make us new creatures—for such a heavenly birth is essential to eternal life.

Now, I think I hear some troubled conscience saying, "When you said just now that if I trusted in Christ I should be saved, I rejoiced, but when you say we must be born again, that saying seems so mysterious that I am troubled." My dear Friend, there is no need to be troubled. If you trust in Christ, then you are born again! I have already told you that there is no possibility of a soul ever truly relying upon the Savior unless there has been a previous new birth to produce his faith.

If you are, tonight, able to put your whole trust in Jesus Christ as God's dear Son, and to take Him to be yours, though your new birth may be too mysterious a thing for you to know much about it, for, "the wind blows where it likes, and you hear the sound of it, but can not tell from where it comes, and where it goes." Yet, your faith is a sufficient index that you are really a partaker of the new birth. I do not want to open the boiler of a steam engine for the sake of knowing what quantity of water there is in it—I am perfectly satisfied by looking at the "tell-tale."

Now faith is the "tell-tale" of the human soul! Where there is faith there is new life. Where there is no faith there is no life. There is no need to dissect a man, anatomize him, and cut him up in order to find out his spirit—you would destroy him in so doing. But when you see the man has action, motion, energy—when you put your hand upon his breast and feel the heaving of the lungs—you know that there is life. Now, if I may so say, faith is the heaving of the spiritual lungs! If you believe in Jesus Christ you are a living man—you have been born, "not of the will of man, but of God."

I should like to ask one question before I am done—have all of you received Christ? "Yes," or "No"? You good people up in the gallery there, I am not going to ask you where you worship generally, nor to what Church you belong, but have you received Christ? "Well, Sir, we were baptized." I do not care a farthing at this moment whether you were baptized or not! I leave that question till we have settled an earlier one. Have you received Christ? "Well, we take the sacrament." Never mind that! Have you received Christ? Do you trust Him and Him only? To the point now—can your soul say—

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand"?

Have you received Jesus Christ, each one of you? And if you have not, why not? Is there anything so hard in receiving Him? I have sometimes thought I should like to tell the tale of the Cross for the first time to a number of savages who would just have sufficient culture to understand it—God was made flesh and dwelt among us. And rather than men should suffer God suffered Himself! And because Justice required punishment, "He bore the punishment instead" of sinners. Why, I think I see their eyes glistening, and I think their hearts must melt!

But you have heard the tale so often that it has become an old story to you! However, I would like to put the question to you again—have you received Jesus Christ? "Well, I have not had much experience," laments one, and another says, "I do not know much," and another cries, "We have had family prayer for twenty years," and another says, "My name is down for twenty guineas in several charitable institutions." Well, all that is very well, but I do not care about any of these matters tonight! All I want to know is, have you received Christ?

"Oh!" says one, "Of course! I was always brought up to it." But you cannot be "brought up to it." You must be brought down to it by being born again! There must be a change in your nature. We do not preach the Gospel, as I have said before, to the depraved and debauched alone. We preach it to you good, excellent people—you whose honesty in trade, and whose moral character set you on high among your fellows, as upon a pinnacle. Even YOU must be born again! Ladies and Gentlemen, you must be born again, as well as the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor. We have the same Gospel to preach to Her Majesty the Queen as we have to the sinners in a refuge or the rogues in a reformatory. We know of no difference in this matter between any of you. A difference of morality there is, and we are thankful for it—but you must be born again as much as the worst rebels in the world!

And you below here, have you received Christ? I know that many of you have, and that your hearts leap at the sound of His name. You can say—

"Jesus, the very thought of You, With rapture fills my breast."

But there are some of you who have not received Christ—I mean not merely you who are occasional hearers—but my constant hearers. You have received me—you believe what I say—but you have not received Christ, and you do not believe what HE tells you. It is one thing to believe in your minister, but quite another to believe in Jesus Christ! I pray you never stop short in receiving anything because we say it, or because we seem to prove it—you must get it burned into you as with a red-hot iron by God the Holy Spirit's power or else it will be of no service to you.

I stood a few hours ago at the bedside of one of our Brethren in Christ who seemed sorely sick and at the point of death. He could not speak aloud but the soft and gentle words which he whispered in my ear were very precious. He had not his peace to make with God in his last hour—he had not then to seek Christ—but was full of perfect peace and rejoicing in unbroken calm. "He will not leave me, will He?" he asked—"He cannot deny Himself. I may sink, but I cannot sink lower than He will go, for underneath me are the everlasting arms."

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, the mere letter of Gospel doctrine will not do to die on—you must have the spirit of it in your heart or you cannot be comforted by it! Believe me, it is stern work to die. A Christian dies peacefully, but it is no child's play, even to him. Some of us, when we have been sick and racked with pain, know that we have had to search for our evidences with much care and anxiety. I have turned over many a moldy old deed that laid by in the chest of my evidences to try if I could—

"Read my title clear To mansions in the skies,"

and glad enough have I been to light on some such word as this—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee,"

and to sing—

"Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Your Cross I cling."

But, my Hearers, what of some of you? The day is coming when the great assemblies of this house will seem but as nothing—when this immense gathering will be but as a drop in a bucket compared with that greater gathering! The trumpet, ringing through earth and Heaven, shall awaken the dead! The righteous and the wicked shall stand in judgment. We shall all be there—this company shall have no exception—there shall be no excuse for being absent on that tremendous day, and then there will be no question which will have so much weight as this one—HAVE YOU RECEIVED CHRIST?

I think I see the Reaper coming. He is hastening to gather the vintage of the world, for the grapes are fully ripe. The ungodly must be gathered first and there they are—thrown in clusters into the winepress of the wrath of God—while the dread angels of avenging Justice tread the grapes until the blood flows out. Will you be there among the accursed clusters of Sodom and Gomorrah? Will you be there, you men of London, you dwellers in Newington and Walworth, who hear the Gospel constantly—will you be cast into the winepress of Jehovah's wrath? And shall the streets be red with your blood?

Or will you be yonder, where, with golden sickle, trusting no angel to do the work, Christ Himself shall reap His golden corn, ear after ear, and take it all home with shouts of delight to His Father's garner? Will you see Him, in that day, as the God that died for you? Will you see Him with exultation? Will you meet Him in the air, and so be forever with the Lord? If so, then receive Jesus, and He will receive you. Take Him into your hearts and He will take you into Heaven. Take Him, His Cross, His people, His Gospel, His doctrines! Take Him, to "have and to hold" Him, "for better and for worse," and then not even "death" shall "part" you, but you shall be with Him "in the day of His appearing."

May the Lord seal His Word with His own blessing!

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John 1,14 #414 - The Glory of Christ--Beheld!

THE GLORY OF CHRIST—BEHELD!

NO. 414

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1861,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory,

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and Truth."

John 1:14.

I CANNOT refrain from mentioning an incident connected with the perusal of the first chapter of John. I suppose there is not a passage in God's Word which has not at some time or other been blessed to the conversion of a soul. Even the fifth chapter of Genesis which is so uninteresting to most readers, because the verses continually end, "And he died," "And he died," "And he died," has been blessed to one—who from the reiteration of the fact that men who lived nine hundred years nevertheless died—was led to think of his own death.

Now the first chapter of John was the means of the conversion of a celebrated writer, Junius the younger, who did good service in the Church. His father, perceiving him to be an ungodly young man, put in his way as much as possible the New Testament and the following is an extract from Junius' account of his own life. "My father, who was frequently reading the New Testament and had long observed with grief the progress I had made in infidelity, put that book in my way in his library in order to attract my attention, if it might please God to bless his design, though without giving me the least intimation of it.

"Here, therefore, I unwittingly opened the New Testament thus providentially laid before me. At the very first view, although I was deeply engaged in other thoughts, that grand chapter of the Evangelist and Apostle presented itself to me—'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God.' I read part of the chapter and was so greeted that I instantly became struck with the divinity of the argument. I was amazed by the majesty and authority of the composition as infinitely surpassing the highest flights of human eloquence. My body shuddered. My mind was in amazement and I was so agitated the whole day that I scarcely knew who I was. Nor did the agitation cease, but continued till it was at last soothed by a humble faith in Him who was made flesh and dwelt among us."

One of the Platonic philosophers who considered all Christian writers to be but barbarians, nevertheless said of the first chapter of John, "This barbarian has comprised more stupendous stuff in three lines than we have done in all our voluminous discourses." And we will to this day

glory in the power of the Holy Spirit that an unlearned and ignorant man like John, the son of Zebedee the fisherman, should be enabled to write a chapter which excels not only the highest flight of eloquence, but the greatest depths of philosophy.

But now for the verse before us. I think, if you look attentively at it and if you are in some slender measure acquainted with the original, you will perceive that John here compares Christ to that which was the greatest glory of the Jewish Church. Let me read it, giving another translation—"The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth." Now you remember that in the Jewish Church its greatest glory was that God tabernacled in its midst—not the tent of Moses, not the various pavilions of the princes of the twelve tribes—but the humble tabernacle in which God dwelt was the boast of Israel.

They had the King Himself in the midst of them. A present God in their midst. The tabernacle was a tent to which men went when they would commune with God and it was the spot to which God came manifestly when He would commune with man. To use Matthew Henry's words, it was the "trysting place" between the Creator and the worshipper. Here they met each other through the slaughter of the bullock and the lamb and there was reconciliation between them.

Now Christ's human flesh was God's tabernacle and it is in Christ that God meets with man and in Christ that man has dealings with God. The Jew of old went to God's tent, in the center of the camp, if he would worship—we come to Christ if we would pay our homage. If the Jew would be released from ceremonial uncleanness—after he had performed the rites— he went up to the sanctuary of his God that he might feel again that there was peace between God and his soul. And we, having been washed in the precious blood of Christ, have access with boldness unto God, even the Father through Christ who is our tabernacle and the tabernacle of God among men.

Now let us draw the parallel a little further. The greatest glory of the tabernacle itself was the Most Holy Place. In the Most Holy Place there stood the ark of the covenant, bearing its golden lid called the mercy seat. Over the mercy seat stood the cherubim, whose wings met each other and beneath the wings of the cherubim there was a bright light known to the Hebrew believer by the name of the Shekinah. That light represented the presence of God. Immediately above that light there might be seen at night a pillar of fire and by day a spiral column of cloud rose from it—which no doubt expanded itself into one vast cloud which covered all the camp— and shielded all the Israelites from the blaze of the broiling sun.

The glory of the tabernacles, I say, was the Shekinah. What does our text say? Jesus Christ was God's Tabernacle and, "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Jesus is not the tabernacle without the glory—He is not as the temple when the voice was heard with the rushing of winds before the siege of Jerusalem, crying, "Arise, let us go." But it was a temple in which God Himself dwelt after a special manner—"for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

The Apostle however points to a surpassing excellence in Christ the Tabernacle, by which He wondrously excels that of the Jewish Church. "Full of grace and Truth." The Jewish tabernacle was rather full of Law than full of grace. It is true there were in its rites and ceremonies foreshadowings of grace. But still in repeated sacrifice there was renewed remembrance of sin

and a man had first to be obedient to the Law of ceremonies before he could have access to the tabernacle at all—but Christ is full of grace—not a little of it but abundance of it is treasured up in Him. The tabernacle of old was not full of Truth, but full of image and shadow and symbol and picture.

But Christ is full of substance. He is not the picture—but the Reality. He is not the shadow—but the Substance. Herein, O Believer, do you rejoice with joy unspeakable—for you come unto Christ—the real Tabernacle of God. You come unto Him who is full of the glory of the Father. And you come unto One in whom you have not the representation of a grace which you need, but the grace itself—not the shadow of a Truth ultimately to be revealed, but that very Truth by which your soul is accepted in the sight of God. I put this forth as a matter for you to think over in your retirement.

It might have constituted the divisions of the sermon but as I want more especially to dwell upon the glory of Christ, we leave these observations as a preface and go more particularly to that part of the subject where the Apostle says, "We beheld His glory, the glory of the onlybegotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth."

I. In the first place, we have here A FAVORED PEOPLE. "We beheld His glory."

And who are these—the "we" to whom the Apostle here refers? They were first of all an elect company, for Jesus said, "I know whom I have chosen." "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But they who did receive Him are described as men who were "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The elect in Christ's day, though they were but a small remnant, nevertheless did exist. There were a few, else had that generation been as Sodom and been made like Gomorrah.

There were twelves and seventies and afterwards we read of three thousand and then of many others who were added to the Church of such as should be saved. In Christ's own day, however, the lines of manifest election seemed to be but very narrow, for there were but few that followed Him and of those who followed Him it is said, many from that day went back and walked no more with Him. For His Truth had sifted the mere professors and reduced them but to a slender company who followed the Lamb wherever He went. The "we," then, who "beheld Christ's glory," were a chosen company.

They were also a called company, for of many of them we read their special calls. Of John himself we read that Jesus walked by the sea and "saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father unending their nets. And He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him." Of most of the Apostles and immediate attendants upon Christ's Person we have a record of their divine and special call by Christ's own voice. And in the case of those respecting whom there was no record preserved, yet was it, nevertheless, the fact—for He had called them as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Indeed, in all of us who shall at any time perceive Christ's glory, it must be because He has called us unto this special privilege as the result of His election of us.

These who beheld His glory were also an illuminated people. For Christ's glory was not manifest unto the rest of mankind. None of the princes of this world knew Him. The priests who had studied

the Law could not discover Him. The members of the Sanhedrim, who were under some expectation of His advent, could not perceive Him. In vain was the star in the east. In vain the miraculous appearance of angels to the shepherds—the blind generation would not perceive Him. In vain the opening of blind eyes and the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. In vain the raising of the dead—in vain all those innumerable signs and wonders. They could not perceive His glory. But of those who did perceive it it may be said, as of Simon Barjona, "Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you."

We may say, then, of those who beheld His glory, the favored people— that they were chosen of sovereign grace, that they were called effectually by the Holy Spirit—and that they were anointed by the same Divine Person. And to this day, Brethren, it is the same. None believe in Christ but those who are His sheep. No man comes unto Him except the Father who has sent Him draws them and none ever perceive Him but those whose eyes are opened by His own healing fingers. Let the question be passed round among us—Do I perceive His glory? Have I seen something of the splendor of God in the humble Man of Nazareth? Have I learned to magnify Him in my soul and have I desired to glorify Him in my life, as my God, my life, my love, my All in All, though once despised and rejected of men?

If so, Beloved—if we can say this from our heart, we are favored indeed and especially favored if we remember how many there are who have never obtained this grace. Not many great men after the flesh see any glory in Christ. They find their glory in the clash of arms and in garments rolled in blood, but not in Him who is meek and lowly of heart, who gives rest to weary souls. Not many wise men have seen any glory in Christ. They find glory in philosophy. They can see glory in nature, but not in Him who is nobler than God's creation, inasmuch as He is the only perfect one among the sons of men. They say they see something of glory in Providence and yet fail to perceive anything wonderful in grace.

Not many wise men are called. Oh, let us be astonished at the sovereignty of God! Let us be filled with gratitude at His compassion. Let us pray that if we know something of the glory we may know more of it day by day and may set it forth among the sons of men, that they, too, may by-and-by perceive His glory—"the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth."

II. But now, secondly we have spoken of the favored people—let us now spend a minute or two in dwelling upon THEIR EXALTED PRIVILEGE. "We beheld His glory."

What is this word "Beheld"? It says not we heard of His glory, we read of it in prophecy, or we listened to it from the lips of others—but we beheld His glory. What a privilege was this, which was accorded to the first disciples! Have you not often envied them? To see the Man, the very Man, in whom God dwelt—to walk with Him as one's companion along His journeys of mercy—to listen to the words as they stream all living from those eloquent lips—to look into His eyes and mark the depth of love that glistened there—to see His face, even though it was more marred than that of any man. I have often sympathized in that child-like hymn——

"I think when I read that sweet story of old, When Jesus was here among men, How He called little children as lambs to His fold, I should like to have been with them then. I wish that His hands had been placed on my head, That His arm had been thrown around me, And that I might have seen His kind looks when He said, 'Let the little ones come unto Me.'"

But better still to have been with him—to have leaned this head upon His bosom—to have told Him my griefs, as they did who took up the body of John and went and told Jesus. To have asked of Him the explanation of difficulties, as they said, "Show us the Father and it suffices." To have had one's faith encouraged by touching His very flesh, as he did of whom it is written that he put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into His side. But what are we talking about? All this is carnal, all this is of sight—and the Christian is a nobler being than to live and walk by sight. He lives by faith. And to this day, Brethren, there is a sight of Christ which can be had by faith. And therefore we need not murmur because we are denied the privilege of sight.

The sight of Christ, it seems, did but little good to those who had it— not even to His disciples—for they were sorry dolts even though He was the Master. It was only when the Spirit came down at Pentecost that they began to know Christ and to understand what He had said to them though He himself had said it. And truly 'tis better to see Christ by faith than it is to see Him by sight, for a sight of Him by faith saves the soul. But we might see Him with the eye and yet crucify Him and be found among the greatest rebels against His government and power.

Now we say to you, have you beheld His glory by faith? Oh, you have all of you heard of it. We, the ministers of Christ, have tried Sabbath after Sabbath to lift Him up and it is such sweet and blessed work that I would love to do every day. When we have to preach the Law we feel it a hard and toilsome servitude, but to preach Christ—O how sweet and blessed is the labor! Happy is the man whose lips are ever overflowing with the news of Jesus! Blessed is he whose ministry is full of Christ! He is blessed in his own soul, as well as blessed unto others.

You have heard of Him, then, but what of all this? You may hear of His glory and perish in your sins. You have read of His glory. This book is in your houses and you read it, I trust, each day. Thus you have read the story of the Man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. And you know how He ascended on high, leading captivity captive and ever sits at the right hand of God. But you may read all this—and yet it shall be a curse and not a blessing, for you knew Him and yet rejected Him. You were among His own and He came unto you and you received Him not. Oh, to behold His glory! This is soul work, saving work, blessed work, everlasting work— have you any interest in it?

But you answer, "How can we behold His glory?" Why faith sees it. Faith looks back to the Man who lived and died for us and sees glory in His shame, honor in His disgraces, riches in His poverty, might in His weakness, triumph in His conflict and immortality in His death. No, Faith is sometimes assisted by Experience. And Experience sees His glory—it sees the glory of His grace in rolling away all our sins. The preciousness of His blood in giving us reconciliation with the Father. The power of the Spirit in subduing the will. The love of His heart in constantly remembering us upon the Throne. And the power of His plea in its perpetual prevalence with God.

Experience shows us the glory of Christ in the deep waters while He puts His arm beneath us and says, "Fear not, you shall not be drowned." It shows us the glory of Christ in the blazing furnace while the Son of Man treads the glowing coals with His afflicted Israel. Experience shows us the glory of Christ in all the attacks of Satan. While He is our shield He wards off every poisoned arrow and shows us the glory of Christ in helping us to live and enabling us to die and by-and-by it shall show us the glory of Christ in enabling us to rise and take possession of the crown which He has purchased for His children.

And with Experience there is another that helps us to behold the glory of Christ, namely, communion. Beloved, I hope you know what that means—when shut in your chamber with God and the world shut out, our eyes behold Him and not another—this is communion. Communion is when we can kneel down in the very posture of the poor agonizing victim of Gethsemane and see by fellowship the sweat of blood as it streams from the pores of His frame—when we can mark Him hounded, hissed, scouted through all the streets of His own city and taken to Calvary to die. Communion knows something of the bitterness of the cup which He then drank, somewhat of the sharpness of the nails that pierced His hands and somewhat of the death which was endured when at last He said, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost.

Yes, communion can show us the glory of Christ even in His shame. And then it can take to its wings and show us His glory beyond the skies. These eyes have never seen the Savior—but this heart has seen Him. These lips have never kissed His cheek, for that they might do and I might be a Judas—but the soul has kissed Him and He has kissed me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine. Think me not enthusiastic or fanatical when I say that the children of God have as near access to Christ today in the spirit as ever John had after the flesh. There is to this day a rich enjoyment to be obtained by those who seek it—in having actual fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Oh, it is a joy worth worlds! Worldling, if you had ever known the sweetness of this bread you would never eat your own ashes again. O pleasures of the world! You would cease to tempt us if you knew how much more sweet are the pleasures of His face. O thunders of this world! You would cease your attempts to frighten us if you knew the sweet satisfaction and solace which we find in Him, when everything is bitter and disconsolate abroad. Yes, we have beheld His glory, just as surely as if we had seen it with our eyes—as certainly as if we had heard with our ears the acclamations of the glorified and taken our seat with them at the foot of His Throne, or with them had veiled our faces with wings and cried, "Holy holy, holy, Lord God omnipotent!"

Just as truly, though not so fully, we have beheld His glory—the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and Truth.

III. Thirdly we have in the text A MOST BLESSED VISION. We have had the favored persons, their exalted privilege and now we

have their blessed vision. We have beheld His glory. Let us dwell upon the thought of His glory for awhile. My Brethren, what a glory have we beheld by faith! By faith, in the first place, we have beheld the glory of His complex Person. We have known and believed that He is the everlasting Word, the veritable Son of the Father. We have beheld Him by faith as dwelling with the Father before the world was. The Beloved of His Father's soul. We have seen Him and we have marked that His goings-forth are of old, even from everlasting. We have seen Him weighing the clouds, measuring the channels of the great deep, planning the heavens and meting out the sea.

We have seen Him with the line and with the plummet making all things according to His wisdom and the purpose of the counsel of His will, for "without Him was not anything made that was made." We have seen Him as God, seated upon the Throne of His Father and we have believed that the sea roars only as He bids it, that the earth with all the creatures that are therein obey His glorious will. Lo, in His hands today the keys of Heaven and death and Hell! We have had no

doubts whatever as to His Divinity for we have seen and known that He is "very God of very God." "God over all, blessed forever Amen."

We have seen him, too, as Man. We have perceived that He is of the substance of His mother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. He is man in all infirmities, but not man in any guiltiness of His own. We see Him as man weak, suffering, hungry, thirsty, dying but without spot or wrinkle— pure, the immaculate Lamb of God. We have beheld Him in the glory of this complex Person—not God deteriorated to man, not man deified to God, but God, very God and very Man. God in all that is God-like, Man in all that is man-like and we have adored Him as such. We have seen in Him the luster of a beauty which far outshines all that earth can present us, or all that Heaven can offer. Whom have we on earth but Jesus? Who is there in Heaven that we can desire beside Him?

Next we have beheld His glory, not merely in His Person, but in the motive for which He undertook His great work. That motive was love. Love which could have His self-interest to be an alloy, love to worthless creatures, love to those who could never repay His love. Love to rebels, love to men who crucified the Lord of Glory—and we have said as we have seen this love sparkling like a jewel in a black setting, lying in the heart of the pool, injured, poverty-stricken, houseless, comfortless Man of Nazareth— "There is a glory here in this love that is never to be found elsewhere."

Then, we have beheld the glory of His self-sacrifice. We have looked upon Him giving up everything for us, renouncing His crown and specter, laying aside His royal robes and splendor, leaving His Father's house and palaces and honor—becoming man, no, a poor man, a despised afflicted man—no, becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. We have read history through but we never saw a self-sacrifice that could equal His. In Him selfishness never lived and therefore, never needed to be kept in cheek. He was not His own. His whole history could be written in this—"He saved others, Himself he cannot save." Glorious Christ, in this while You were rejected of men, we have beheld Your glory.

We have beheld, moreover, the glory of His endurance. He is tempted in every point yet fails in none. The world's glory lies at His feet. He chooses rather our salvation than the glories of earth. He counted the reproach that He should bear for us greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We see Him mocked, yet never reviling—spit upon, yet never spitting back again even so much as a word of venom. We see Him despised, yet never attempting to clear Himself—accused, yet silent before the judgment seat—so giving up Himself that He can bear all things, whatsoever they may be.

Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it. Though all the substance of the world's house were offered Him that He might renounce His love, yet did He utterly despise the world. Who was ever such a martyr as the Savior? Who endured as He did? Who bore such contradiction of sinners against Himself? Great God, O Jesus—for such You are—Great God, there is none like You in the omnipotence of Your endurance. We have seen Your glory, even when You did tabernacle among men.

And we have seen His glory also in His great and blessed perseverance even to the end, having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end—having undertaken He went through with it. He never paused till He could say, "It is finished." Then He gave up the ghost, but not till then. Now today behold His perseverance. For Zion's sake He does not rest and for

Jerusalem's sake He never holds His peace day nor night until God shall be pleased to make her glory come forth as the brightness and her righteousness as a lamp that burns. On, on, on—neither to the right nor to the left turning for a moment, without pause, without making a moment's question—onwards to His destined work He speeds and never does He cease till He can say to His Father, "I have finished the work that You gave Me to do."

And then, not to keep you too long even upon such a subject as this, we have beheld His glory in His final triumph. Yes, Brethren, by faith we have seen in the very moment when the sun was darkened and when the earth was shaken and the rocks rent asunder—we have seen Christ darkening the world's glories. We have seen Him rending rocky hearts and bidding the dead arise. We have seen Him in the very instant when He gave up the ghost leaping from the Cross, pursuing with thunderbolts the prince of Hell and driving him to darker shades below. We have seen Him grasping at last the tyrant in His hands and chaining Him to His chariot wheel. Our faith has beheld Him riding up the everlasting hills, leading captivity captive. We have seen the gates wide open flung while angels said, "Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lift up, you everlasting doors. And the King of Glory shall come in." We have joined by faith the triumph and have swelled the train. We have heard the acclamation of the spirits of the just made perfect. We have heard above all the voice of God, "Well done. You have finished your Father's will." We have seen Him ascend in august majesty the Throne which is His resting place and we have seen Him sit down on the right hand of the Father, while from Heaven and earth and even Hell, there went up one prolonged note of praise, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigns."

No, our faith has gone beyond the mere matters of the past. We have beheld His glory, we have seen Him as one by one His sheep are brought and His prayer is heard, "Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am." We have seen Him going forth day after day in the chariot of Salvation scattering with both His hands His mercies among the poverty-stricken sons of men and we have cried unto Him, "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O You most mighty." Often has our prayer been, Come forth, O Jesus. Heaven obeys You, earth shakes at Your presence, Hell trembles at You, devils are dismayed. Come forth, put Your arrow to the string and lift up Your glittering spear. Who, who shall stay Your course, or in Your presence stand?

Like chaff before the wind so shall they be driven and as stubble before the flame so shall they be utterly consumed. We have been helped to fly even to the great end of all things and by faith have seen His second advent. We have beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. We have seen Him come—

"But not the same As once in lowliness He came — A silent Lamb before His foes, A weary Man and full of woes."

We have seen Him come —

"With dreadful form, With rainbow-wreath and robes of storm; On cherub wings and wings of wind, Appointed Judge of all mankind!"

We have beheld His millennial reign. We have marked the dwellers in the wilderness blowing before Him, the kings of Sheba and Sheba offering their gifts. We have heard the universal song

from the dwellers in the rocks and the islands of the sea. We have seen the halcyon age of love when no strife shall vex Messiah's reign. When they shall—

"Hang the useless helmet high And study war no more."

And then we have seen the judgment. We have beheld the reeling earth unable to bear the splendor of His triumph. We have heard the wailings of His enemies. We have seen them melt as wax before the flame, utterly consumed like the fat of rams upon His altar.

We have at last, by faith, seen the end—when He shall give up the kingdom to God, even our Father. We have heard, I say, the last word of the whole history in the shout of complete victory—

"Lo, Jehovah's banners furled Sheathed His sword—He speaks—'tis done! And the kingdoms of this world Are the kingdoms of His Son. Then the end—beneath His rod, Man's last enemy shall fall; Hallelujah! Christ in God, God in Christ is All in All."

IV. Have patience with me while I now conclude. In the fourth place the text reminds us of THE TESTIMONY WHICH WE WHO HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY ARE SURE TO BEAR.

We bear our testimony that He is "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth." Brothers and Sisters, instead of preaching, let me bear my testimony—my testimony of what I have seen, what my own ears have heard and my own heart has tasted—that Christ is the only begotten of the Father. He is Divine to me, if He is only human to all the world besides. He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has turned my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, broken a chain of steel, opened the gates of brass and snapped the bars of iron. He has turned my mourning into laughter and my desolation into joy. He has led my captivity captive, made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him, to me He must be the only begotten of the Father—blessed be His name!—

"O that I could now adore Him, Like the heavenly host above, Who forever bow before Him, And unceasing sing His love. Happy songsters! When shall I your chorus join?"

Your name is precious even as ointment poured forth. You are indeed my Lord and my God, as certainly as ever You were the God of Thomas. Like Paul, my soul shall say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

Again—I bear my testimony that He is full of grace. Ah, had He not been, I should never have beheld His glory. I was full of sin to overflowing. I was condemned already because I believed not upon Him. He drew me when I wanted not to come and though I struggled hard He continued still to draw. And when at last I came all trembling like a condemned culprit to His mercy seat, He said, "Your sins which are many are all forgiven you, be of good cheer." "He took me up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. He has set my feet upon a Rock—Himself—and put a new song into my mouth and established my goings."

Let others despise Him. But I bear witness that He is full of grace. Oh, I would that some poor sinner here who is full of sin would remember that Christ is full of grace—I would that you, poor despairing one—you who have given yourself up as a lost soul, would remember that—

"Plenteous grace with Him is found, Grade to pardon all your sin May the healing streams abound, Make and keep you pure within."

Finally I bear my witness, that as He is full of grace He is full of Truth. True have His promises been, not one has failed. I have often doubted Him—for that I blush. He has never failed me—in this I must rejoice. His promises have been yes and amen. I do but speak the testimony of every believer in Christ, though I put it thus personally to make it the more forcible. I bear witness that never servant had such a Master as I have. Never brother had such a kinsman as He has been to me. Never spouse had such a husband as Christ has been to my soul. Never sinner a better Savior—never soldier a better captain—never mourner a better comforter than Christ has been to my spirit.

I want none beside Him. In life He is my life and in death He shall be the death of death. In poverty Christ is our riches, in sickness He makes our bed. In darkness He is our star and in brightness He is our sun. He is the manna of the camp in the wilderness and He shall be the new corn of the host when they come to Canaan. He is the Rock that follows them today—He is the Rock on which they shall rest and within which they shall dwell forever—

"All hail Immanuel, all Divine, In You Your Father's glories shine; You brightest, sweetest, fairest One, That eyes have seen or angels known. O may I live to reach the place Where He unveils His lovely face. Where all His beauties saints behold, And sing His name to harps of gold.

—So be it, Lord, by Your grace. Amen.

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

John 1,14-17 #1862 - The True Tabernacle and Its

THE TRUE TABERNACLE AND ITS

GLORY OF GRACE AND PEACE

NO. 1862

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1885,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His Glory,

the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father,) full of Grace and Truth."

John 1:14.

"For the Law was given through Moses, but

Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ."

John 1:17.

THERE was a time when God freely communed with men. The voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the Garden in the cool of the day. With unfallen Adam, the great God dwelt in sweet and intimate fellowship—but sin came and not only destroyed the Garden, but destroyed the communion of God with His creature, man. A great gulf opened between man, as evil, and God as infinitely pure—and had it not been for the amazing goodness of the Most High, we would have, all of us, been forever banished from His Presence and from the Glory of His power! The Lord God, in infinite love, resolved that He, Himself, would bridge the distance and would again dwell with man. And, in token of this, He made Himself manifest to His chosen nation, Israel, when they were in the wilderness.

He was pleased to dwell in type and symbol among His people in the very center and heart of their camp! Do you see yonder tent with its curtains of goats' hair in the center of the canvas city? You cannot see within it, but it is all glorious within with precious wood, pure gold and tapestry of many colors. Within its most sacred shrine shines forth a bright light between the wings of cherubim, which light was the symbol of the Presence of the Lord! But if you cannot see within, yet you can see above the sacred tent, a cloud which arises from the top of the Holy of Holies and then expands like a vast tree so as to cover all the host and protect the chosen of God from the intense heat of the sun, so apt to make the traveler faint when passing over the burning sand! If you will wait till the sun is down, that same cloud will become luminous and light up the whole camp! Thus it was both shade and light—and by its means was enjoyed that safety which was afterwards set forth in the promise, "The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night." Over all, the

Glory was a defense and a comfort. The Lord dealt not so with any nation, save only His people Israel, of whom He said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Volume 31 1The day of the type is over. We see no more a nation secluded from all others and made to be as "the Church in the wilderness." God does not now confine His abode to one people, for, "The God of the whole earth shall He be called." There is now no spot on earth where God dwells in preference to another. Did not our Lord say, at the well of Sychar, "Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But. . .the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth"? Wherever true hearts seek the Lord, He is found of them. He is as much present on the lone mountain's side as in the aisles of yonder abbey, or in the galleries of this tabernacle. "Howbeit the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the Prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? says the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?"

Yet there is a true House of God, a real Temple of the Infinite, a living abode of the Godhead. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." There is a place where God does still meet with man and hold fellowship with Him. That place is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." The Manhood of Christ is become to us the anti-type of that tent in the center of the camp! God is in Christ Jesus! Christ Jesus is God! And in His blessed Person, God dwells in the midst of us as in a tent—for such is the force of the original in our text. "The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled, or tented, among us." That is to say, in Christ Jesus the Lord dwelt among men, as God of old dwelt in His sanctuary in the midst of the tribes of Israel. This is very delightful and hopeful for us—the Lord God does dwell among us through the Incarnation of His Son.

But the Substance far excels the shadow, for in the wilderness, the Lord only dwelt in the abode of man, but now His approach to us is closer, for He dwells in the flesh of man. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Note that word, "flesh." It does not say, "The Word was made man"—it means that, but the use of the word, "flesh," brings the Lord Jesus still closer to us and shows that He took on Him the very nature and substance of manhood! He did not merely assume the name and notion and appearance of manhood, but the reality—the weakness, the suffering, the mortality of our manhood He actually took into union with Himself! He was no phantom, or apparition, but He had a human body and a human soul. "The Word was made flesh." When the Lord became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, His Incarnation in a human body brought Him far nearer to man than when He only abode within curtains and occupied a tent in the midst of Israel.

Moreover, it is to be noted that God does, in the Person of Jesus, not merely dwell among men, but He has joined Himself unto men—the Word not only dwelt in flesh, but, "was made flesh." It is impossible to use words which are exactly accurate to describe the wonderful Incarnation of the Son of God in human flesh, but these words are used to show that our Lord is as truly and as really Man as He is God. Not only does God dwell in the body of man, but our Lord Jesus is God and Man in one Person. He is not ashamed to speak of men as His brethren. "Forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also, Himself, likewise took part of the same." So that the Lord Jesus is one with us! This approach to us is exceedingly close. God was never one with the tabernacle, but in Christ Jesus He is one with us. This union has in it a sweetness of

sympathy, a tenderness of relationship and a condescension of fellowship greatly to be admired. Now we listen to the music of that blessed name, Emanuel, "God With Us." In the Person of the Only-Begotten, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we see God reconciling the world unto Himself. Let us rejoice and be glad that we have in Jesus more than Israel had in the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High! The ancient Believer gazed upon the sacred tent, he thought of the holy place of sacrifice and the Holy of Holies, the inner shrine of the Lord's indwelling—but we have infinitely more—we have God in our nature, and in Him, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

In and around the tent where the Lord dwelt in the center of the camp, there was a manifestation of the Presence of God. This was the Glory of that house, but how scanty was the revelation! A bright light which I have already mentioned, the Shekinah, is said to have shone over the Mercy Seat—but only the High Priest could see it and he only saw it once in the year when he entered, with blood, within the veil. Outside, above the Holy Place, there was the manifest Glory of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. This sufficed to bear witness that God was there, but still, cloud and fire are but physical appearances and cannot convey a true appearance of God, who is a spirit! God cannot be perceived by the senses— the fiery, cloudy pillar could appeal only to the eyes. The excellence of the indwelling of God in Christ is this—that there is in Him a Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, the moral and spiritual Glory of Godhead! This is to be seen, but not with the eyes—this is to be perceived, but not by the carnal senses. This is seen, heard and known by spiritual men whose mental perceptions are keener than those of sight and hearing!

In the Person of the Lord, there is a Glory which is seen by our faith, which is discerned of our renewed spirits and is made to operate upon our hearts. The Glory of God in the sanctuary was seen only by the priest of the house of Aaron. The Glory of God in the face of Christ is seen by all Believers who are all priests unto God! That Glory the priest beheld but once in the year—but we steadily behold that Glory at all times and are transformed by the sight. The Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is not a thing of outward appearance to be seen with the eyes, like the pillar of cloud and fire, but there is an abiding, steady luster of holy, gracious, truthful Character about our Lord Jesus Christ which is best seen by those who, by reason of sanctification, are made fit to discern it.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Yes, they do see Him in Christ Jesus! "No man has seen God at any time; the OnlyBegotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Many of us besides the Apostles can say, "We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." We have not seen Jesus raise the dead; we have not seen Him cast out devils; we have not seen Him hush the winds and calm the waves; but we do see, with our mind's eyes, His spotless holiness, His boundless love, His superlative truth, His wondrous heavenliness—in a word, we have seen, and do see His fullness of Grace and Truth—and we rejoice in the fact that the tabernacling of God among men in Christ Jesus is attended with a more real Glory than the mere brilliance of light and the glow of flame!

The condescension of Christ's love is to us more glorious than the pillar of cloud. And the zeal of our Lord's self-sacrifice is more excellent than the pillar of fire. As we think of the Divine mysteries which meet in the Person of our Lord, we do not envy Israel the gracious manifestations vouchsafed her when "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the Glory of the Lord

covered the tabernacle," for we have all this and more in our Incarnate God who is with us always, even to the end of the world!

As the Holy Spirit shall help me, I shall, at this time, say, first of all, Let us behold this tabernacling of God. And, secondly, Let us avail ourselves of this tabernacling of God in all the ways for which it was intended.

I. First, then, LET US BEHOLD THIS TABERNACLING OF GOD WITH US. "We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." In Jesus Christ all the attributes of God are to be seen—veiled, but yet truly there. You have only to read the Gospels and to look with willing eyes—and you shall behold in Christ all that can possibly be seen of God. It is veiled in human flesh, as it must be, for the Glory of God is not to be seen by us absolutely. It is toned down for these dim eyes of ours, but the Godhead is there, the perfect Godhead in union with the perfect Manhood of Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be Glory forever and ever!

Two Divine things are more clearly seen in Jesus than anything else. Upon these I would speak at this time, considering the two, together, and then each one separately—"Full of Grace and Truth."

Observe the two glorious qualities, joined inseparably—Grace and Truth—and observe that they are spoken of in the concrete. The Apostle says that the Only-Begotten is "full of Grace and Truth." He did not come to tell us about Grace, but actually to bring us Grace. He is not full of the news of Grace and Truth, but of Grace and Truth, themselves. Others had been messengers of gracious tidings, but He came to bring Grace. Others teach us truth, but Jesus is the Truth of God. He is that Grace and Truth whereof others spoke! Jesus is not merely a teacher, an exhorter, a worker of Grace and Truth, but these heavenly things are in Him. He is full of them! I want you to note this. It raises such a difference between Christ and others—you go to others to hear of Grace and Truth, but you must go to Christ to see them! There may be—there is Divine Grace in other men, but not as it is in Christ—they have it as water flowing through a pipe, but He has it as water in its fountain and source! He has Grace to communicate to the sons of men, Grace without measure, Grace essential and abiding. There is the Truth of God in others where God has worked it, by His Spirit, but it is not in them as it is in Christ. In Him dwell the depth, the substance, the essence of the fact! Grace and Truth come to us by Him and yet they always abide in Him! I say again, our Lord did not merely come to teach Grace and Truth, or to impress them upon us, but He came to exhibit in His own Person, life and work, all the Grace and Truth which we need. He has brought us Grace in rivers and the Truth of God in streams—of these He has an infinite fullness—of that fullness all His saints receive!

This Grace and Truth are blended. The, "and," between the two words I would treat as more than a common conjunction. The two rivers unite in one fullness—"Full of Grace and Truth"—that is to say, the Grace is truthful Grace, Grace not in fiction nor in fancy, Grace not to be hoped for and to be dreamed of, but Grace, every atom of which is fact! It is redemption which redeems, pardon which blots out sin, renewal which actually regenerates, salvation which completely saves! We have not, here, blessings which charm the ears and cheat the soul, but real, substantial favors from God that cannot lie. Then blend these things the other way. "Grace and Truth"—the Lord has come to bring us Truth, but it is not the kind of truth which censures, condemns and punishes—it is gracious Truth, Truth steeped in love, Truth saturated with mercy! The Truth which Jesus brings to His people comes not from the Judgement Seat, but from the Mercy Seat! It has a gracious drift

and aim about it and always tends to salvation. His Light is the life of men. If you are overshadowed with a dark Truth of God which seems to deepen your despair, look at it again and you will perceive, within it, a hidden Light of God which is sown for the righteous. The darkness of convincing and humbling Truth makes for the Light of God—by engendering despair of self, heart-searching Truth is meant to drive you to the true Hope.

There is Grace to God's people in everything that falls from the lips of Jesus Christ. His lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. Myrrh, in itself, is bitter, but such is the Grace of our Lord Jesus that His lips impart sweetness to it. See how Grace and Truth thus blend and qualify each other! The Grace is all true and the Truth is all gracious. This is a wondrous compound made according to the art of the Divine Apothecary. Where else is Grace so true, or Truth so gracious?

Furthermore, it is Grace and Truth balanced. I wish I were able to communicate my thoughts, this morning, as they came to me when I was meditating upon this passage, but this thought almost speaks for itself. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of Grace, but He has not neglected the other quality which is somewhat sterner, namely, that of Truth. I have known many in this world, very loving and affectionate, but they have not been faithful. On the other hand, I have known men to be sternly honest and truthful, but they have not been gentle and kind. But in the Lord Jesus Christ there is no defect either way. He is full of Grace which invites the publican and the sinner to Himself, but He is full of Truth which repels the hypocrite and Pharisee. He does not hide a Truth of God, however terrible it may be, from man—He plainly declares the wrath of God against all unrighteousness. But when He has spoken terrible Truth, He has uttered it in such a gracious and tender manner, with so many tears of compassion for the ignorant and those that are out of the way, that you are as much won by His Grace as convicted by His Truth! Our Lord's ministry is not Truth, alone, nor Grace, alone, but is a balanced, well-ordered system of Grace and Truth. The Lord Himself is, in His Character, "just and having salvation." He is both King of Righteousness and King of Peace. He does not save unjustly, nor does He proclaim Truth unlovingly. Grace and Truth are equally conspicuous in Him.

Beloved, notice, here, that both these qualities in our Lord are at the fullest. He is "full of Grace." Who could be more so? In the Person of Jesus Christ, the immeasurable Grace of God is treasured up. God has done for us, by Christ Jesus, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or even think. It is not possible, even, for imagination to conceive of any person more gracious than God in Christ Jesus! You cannot desire, certainly you cannot require, anything that should exceed what is found of Grace in the Person, offices, work and death of the Only-Begotten. Come, you that have large minds and intellects that are creative, and see if you can devise anything that should be mentioned in the same day with what God, in the infinite Glory of His Grace, has given us in the Person of His Son!

And there is an equal fullness of Truth about our Lord. He, Himself, as He comes to us as the Revelation and Manifestation of God, declares to us, not some Truth, but all Truth. All of God is in Christ—and all of God means all that is true, all that is right, all that is faithful, all that is just and all that is according to righteousness and holiness. Christ Jesus has brought to us the Justice, Truth and Righteousness of God to the fullest— He is the Lord our righteousness! There are no reserves of disagreeable fact in Christ. There is nothing hidden from us of Truth that might alarm us, nor anything that might have shaken our confidence. Nor, on the other hand, is any Truth kept back

which might have increased our steadfastness. He says, "If it were not so, I would have told you." Admire the full-orbed splendor of the Sun of Righteousness. Ask not with Pilate, "What is truth?" but behold it in God's dear Son! Oh, I know not how to speak to you upon themes so full and deep! How shall I, that am but as a twinkling dewdrop on a blade of grass, reflect the full Glory of this Sun of Righteousness? But all Truth and all Grace dwell in Christ in all their fullness beyond conception—and the two lie in each other's bosoms forever—to bless us with boundless, endless joy and Glory!

Thus have I taken the two together. Now I want to dwell briefly on each one by itself.

Grace is put first. "We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the OnlyBegotten of the Father, full of Grace." Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is His only-begotten Son. Others are begotten of God, but no other was ever begotten of God as Christ was. Consequently, when He came into this world, the Glory that was about Him was a Glory as of the Only-Begotten. A very singular, very special and incommunicable Glory abides in the Person of our Lord. Part of this was the Glory of His Grace. Now, in the Old Testament, in that 34th Chapter of Exodus, which we read, in part, this morning, you notice that the Glory of God lay in His being, "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and Truth." The Glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father must lie in the same things as the Glory of the Father, namely, in long-suffering, goodness and Truth. In Christ there is a wonderful display of the gentleness, patience, pity, mercy and love of God. Not merely did He teach the Grace of God and invite us to the Grace of God, but in Himself He displayed the Grace of God!

This is to be seen, first, in His Incarnation. It is a wonderful instance of Divine Grace that the Word should be made flesh and dwell among us and reveal His Glory to us. Apart from anything that springs out of the Incarnation of Christ, that Incarnation, itself, is a wondrous act of Grace. There must be hope for men, now that man is next akin to God through Jesus Christ. The angels were not mistaken when they not only sang, "Glory to God in the highest," but also, "on earth peace, goodwill towards men," because in Bethlehem, the Son of God was born of a virgin! God, in our Nature, must mean God with gracious thoughts towards us! If the Lord had meant to destroy the race, He never would have espoused it and taken it into union with Himself. There is fullness of Grace in the fact of the Word made flesh, tabernacling among us!

More than this, there is fullness of Grace in the life of Christ when we consider that He lived here in order to perfect Himself as our High Priest. Was He not made perfect through His sufferings, that He might sympathize with us in all our woes? He was compassed with infirmities, bore our sorrows and endured those crosses of the human life which press so heavily on our own shoulders—and all this to make Himself able to deal graciously with us in a tender and brotherly way! Apart from that which comes out of this wonderful brotherhood, there is a bottomless depth of Grace about the fellowship, itself. The Lord Jesus cannot curse me, for He has borne my curse. He cannot be unkind to me, for He has shared my sorrows. If every pang that rends my heart has also rent His heart and, if into all my woes He has descended even deeper than I have gone, it must mean love to me—it cannot mean anything else and it must mean Truth, for Jesus did not play at fellowship—His griefs were real. I say then, that this manifestation of God in the Person of Christ Jesus is seen in His sorrowing life to be full of Grace and Truth.

Then think, for a minute, of what He did. He was so full of Grace that when He spoke, His words dropped a fatness of Grace! The dew of His own love was upon all His discourses and when He moved about and touched men, here and there, virtue went out of Him because He was so full of it. At one time He spoke and pardoned a sinner, saying, "Your sins are forgiven you." At another moment He battled with the consequences of sin, raising men from sickness and from death! He turned Himself and fought with the Prince of Darkness, himself, and cast him out from those whom he tormented. He went about like a cloud which is big with rain and, therefore, plentifully waters arid and dry places. His life was boundless compassion! There was a power of Grace about His garments, His voice, His look—and in all He was so true that none ever thought Him capable of subterfuge. Everywhere He went, He scattered Grace among the children of men—and He is just the same now—fullness of Grace still abides in Him! When it came to His death, which was the pouring out of His soul, then His fullness of Grace was seen! He was full of Grace, indeed, for He emptied Himself to save men. He was, Himself, not only man's Savior, but his salvation! He gave Himself for us! He was, indeed, full of Grace when He bore our sins in His own body on the Cross. His was love at its height, since He died on the Cross, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Pronounce the word, "substitution," and you cannot help feeling that the Substitute for guilty man was full of Grace! Or use that other word, "representative," and remember that whatever Jesus did, He did as the Covenant Head of His people. If He died, they died in Him. If He rose again, they rose in Him. If He ascended up on high, they ascended in Him and if He sits at the right hand of God, they also sit in the heavenly places in Him.

When He shall come a second time, it shall be to claim the Kingdom for His chosen as well as for Himself—and all the Glory of the future ages is for them—not for Himself alone. He says, "Because I live, you shall live, also." Oh, the richness of the Grace and Truth that dwell in our Lord as the Representative of His people! He will enjoy nothing unless His people enjoy it with Him! "Where I am, there, also, shall My servant be." To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His Throne."

There is yet another word higher than "substitution," higher than "representation," and that is "union." We are one with Christ, joined to Him by a union that never can be broken. Not only does He do what He does, representing us, but we are joined unto Him in one spirit, members of His body and partakers of His Glory! Is not this Grace, Grace unspeakable? Is it not a miracle of love that worms of earth should ever be one with Incarnate Deity? And so one that they never can be separated throughout the ages?

Thus I have shown you that there is, in our Lord, a fullness of Grace. Your own thoughts will dig deeper than mine.

But then it is said there is also in Him a fullness of Truth, by which I understand that in Christ Himself, not merely in what He said, did and promised, there is a fullness of the Truth of God. And this is true, first, in the fact that He is the fulfillment of all the promises concerning Him that went before. God had promised great things by His Prophets concerning the coming Messiah, but all those predictions are absolutely matters of fact in the Person of the Well-Beloved. "All the promises of God are yes and Amen in Christ Jesus." Verily He has bruised the serpent's head. Verily He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Verily He has proclaimed liberty to the captives. Verily He has proved Himself a Prophet like unto Moses.

According to my second text, in verse 17, I understand our Lord Jesus to be "Truth" in the sense of being the Substance of all the types. The Law that was given through Moses was but symbolical and emblematical. But Jesus is the Truth of God. He is really that Blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than that of Abel—He is, in very deed, the Paschal Lamb of God's Passover. He is the Burnt-Offering, the Sin-Offering and the Peace-Offering—all in one! He is the true Scapegoat, the true morning and evening Lamb. In fact, He is, in Truth, what all the types and figures were in pattern. Blessed be God, Brothers and Sisters, whenever you see great things in the Old Testament in the type, you see the real Truth of those things in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! The Jew had nothing that we have not—they had nothing, even in outline and shadow, which we have not obtained in Substance! The Covenant in its fullness is in Christ! The prophecy is in Moses, the fulfillment is in Jesus! The foreshadowing is in the Law, the Truth is in the Word made flesh!

Further than that, our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be Grace and Truth in this sense, that He truthfully deals with matters of fact in the case of our salvation. I know the notion of the world is that the salvation of Christ is a pretty dream, a handsome piece of sentiment. But there is nothing dreamy about it. It is no fiction—it is fact upon fact! The Lord Jesus Christ does not gloss over or conceal the condition of man in his salvation. He finds man condemned and takes him as condemned in the very worst sense—condemned of a capital offense. And as man's Substitute, He endures the capital penalty and dies in the sinner's place. The Lord Jesus views the sinner as depraved, yes, as dead in trespasses and sins, and He quickens him by His resurrection life. He does not wink at the result of the Fall and of actual sin, but He comes to the dead sinner and quickens him—He comes to the diseased heart and heals it!

To me, the Gospel is a wonderful embodiment of Omnipotent Wisdom and the Truth of God. If the Gospel had said to men, "The Law of God is certainly righteous, but it is too stern, too exacting and, therefore, God will wink at many sins and make provision for salvation by omitting to punish much of human guilt," why, my Brothers and Sisters, we would always have been in jeopardy! If God could be unjust to save us, He could also be changeable and cast us away! If there was anything rotten in the state of our salvation, we should fear that it would, at last, fail us! But our foundation is sure, for the Lord has excavated down to the rock! He has taken away every bit of mere sentiment and sham and His salvation is real throughout. It is a glorious salvation of Grace and Truth in which God takes the sinner, as He is, and deals with Him as He is—yes, and deals with the sinner as God is, on the principles of true righteousness— and yet saves him!

But it means more than that. The Lord deals with us in the way of Grace and that Grace encourages a great many hopes—and those hopes are all realized, for He deals with us in Truth. Our necessities demand great things and Grace actually supplies those great things. The old Law could never make those who came to it, perfect as pertaining to the conscience, but the Grace of God makes Believers perfect as pertaining to the conscience! If I were to sit down and try to imagine a flaw in the ground of my salvation by Christ, I could not do it! Believing, as I do, in Him who bore my sins in His own body on the Cross, I feel that by no possibility can His Atonement fail me. I have not imagination strong enough to feign a reason for distrust—I do not see hole or corner in which any charge could lurk against the man that believes in Jesus Christ. My conscience is satisfied—more than satisfied!

Sometimes it even seems to me that my sins could not have deserved that the Son of God should die. The Atonement is greater than the sin. Speak of the vindication of the Law? Is not the vindication even greater than the dishonor? Does not the Law of God shine out more lustrous in its indescribable Glory through the Sacrifice of Christ as the penalty for sin, than it would have done had it never been broken, or had all the race of Law-breakers been swept into endless destruction? O Brothers and Sisters, in the salvation of Jesus there is Grace unrivalled! There is a deep Truth of God, a substantiality, an inward soul-satisfaction in the Sacrifice of Christ which makes us feel that it is a full Atonement—a fountain of "Grace and Truth."

Nor have I yet quite brought out all the meaning, even if I have succeeded so far. Christ has brought to us "Grace and Truth," that is to say, He works in Believers both Grace and Truth. We need Grace to rescue us from sin—He has brought it. We need the Truth of God in the inward parts—He has worked it. The system of salvation by atonement is calculated to produce truthful men. The habit of looking for salvation through the great Sacrifice fosters the spirit of justice, begets in us a deep abhorrence of evil and a love for that which is right and true. By nature we are all liars and either love or make a lie—for this cause we are content with refuges of lies and we compass ourselves with deceit. In our carnal state we are as full of guile as an egg is full of meat—but when the Lord comes to us in Christ, no longer imputing our trespasses to us—then He takes out of our heart that deceit and desperate wickedness which had otherwise remained there! I say it, and dare avow it, that the system of salvation by the indwelling of God in Christ and the Atonement offered by Him for men has a tendency in it to infuse Grace into the soul and to produce Truth in the life! The Holy Spirit employs it to that end. I pray that you and I may prove it so by the Grace which causes us to love both God and man—and the truthfulness with which we deal in all the affairs of life.

Thus has our Lord displayed the Glory of God in the Grace and Truth with which He is filled. I am sorry I have spoken so feebly on so grand a theme. May the Spirit bless you even through the infirmities of my speech!

II. Now I want a few minutes to say to you, Come Brothers and Sisters, LET US AVAIL OURSELVES OF THIS TABERNACLING OF GOD AMONG US.

First, then, if God has come to dwell among men by the Word made flesh, let us pitch our tents around this central tabernacle—do not let us live as if God were a long way off. To the Israelites, God was equally near from every quarter of the camp. The tabernacle was in the center and the center is equally near to every point of the circumference. No true Israelite could say, "I must go across the sea, or soar up into the air, or dive into the depths to find my God." Every Israelite could say, "He dwells between the cherubim: I have but to go to His Tabernacle to be in His Presence and speak with Him." Our God is not far from any of His people this day. We are made near by the blood of Christ. God is everywhere present, but there is a higher presence of effectual Grace in the Person of the OnlyBegotten. Do not let us live as if we worshipped a far-off God. Let us not repine as if we were deserted. Let us not feel alone, for the Father is with us—

"God is near you; therefore cheer your sad soul."

Open your window towards Jerusalem, as Daniel did. Pray with your eyes upon Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily in the greatest nearness to us. God is never far away

since Christ has come to dwell among men!

Next, let us resort to this central Tabernacle to obtain Grace to help in time of need. Let us come to Christ without fear, for He has Grace to give and He will give it to us abundantly whenever we need it. I like to think of the wording of my text. Leave out the parenthesis, and it runs, "He dwelt among us full of Grace." He could not have dwelt among such provoking ones if He had not been full of Grace! But if He dwells among us full of Grace, we need not fear that He will cast us away because of our sins and failings. I invite you, therefore, to come boldly to Him who is full of forgiving love. I beg you to come and receive of His fullness, for Grace is truly Grace when it is communicated—Grace which is not distributed is Grace in name only. "Alas!" you say, "I need so much Grace." Brother, it is treasured up in Christ for you without measure! It is placed in Him that you may have it. Do we not try to persuade the sinner that there is life in a look? Shall I need to persuade saints that Grace is equally free to them? Do we not tell the sinner that God is not to be sought for as far away, but that He is waiting to be gracious? Must I tell the Believer the same?

You may, at this moment, obtain all the Grace you need. The door is open! Enter and take what you will. Do not stop till you reach home and go through a set of religious exercises, but here, and now, believe in Jesus to the fullest! In the center of the camp is the Incarnate God; Israel had but to go to the central tent to find present help in time of trouble. In the Person of Christ, who has said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world," there is, in Truth, all the Grace you can possibly need! Come to this well and drink. Receive of His fullness and go on your way rejoicing.

What shall we do next? Brothers and Sisters, since God in Christ is in the midst of us, let us abide in joyful, peaceful confidence in Him who is Grace and Truth to us. Do not let us wander to other sources. To whom would we go? Shall we leave our God? Shall we leave His Grace, His Truth? Do not let us dream that He is changed, for He is God! Do not imagine that He has left, for He has said, "This is My rest forever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Do not let us conceive that His Grace and Truth are exhausted, for His fullness is eternal! Let us receive strong consolation and remain steadfast, unmovable. Let us quietly rest in the firm belief that all we can need between here and Heaven, all that we need this moment and in all moments yet to come, is treasured up in Christ Jesus who is abidingly the center of His Church and the manifestation of God.

Once more. If this is so and God does really dwell in Christ in the midst of His people "full of Grace and Truth," let us tell everybody of it. I am sure if I had been an Israelite in the wilderness and had met an Amalekite or an Edomite, I should have gloried in my God and in the privileges which His Presence secured me. We know that Amalekites and Edomites could not have come into the house of the Lord, but nowadays, if we meet with one who is a stranger, we can tell him of our privilege with sweet persuasion, on the desire that the stranger can be brought near through the blood of the Lamb. Therefore let us abundantly speak of the dwelling of God with men! Let us proclaim to all that the Lord has come to man, not in wrath, not in judgement, but "full of Grace and Truth."

O my unconverted Hearer, come to Jesus! He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him. Draw near to the meek and lowly Jesus and you draw near to God! He says, "He that has seen Me, has seen the Father." Publish the invitation of Grace to the four winds! Ring out your silver trumpets, or if you have them not, sound your rams' horns—but somehow let all people know that the Tabernacle of God is with men and He dwells among them! Proclaim this

news in the far country, that the wandering prodigal may hear it and cry, "I will arise and go to my Father." God has come to men! Will not men come to God? In Christ Jesus, God invites men to come to Him—will you not come to receive Grace and Truth?

One more lesson remains and that is—what manner of people ought we to be among whom Jehovah dwells? It must have been a very solemn thing to be a member of that great camp of millions in the wilderness of Sinai. God's Presence in the midst of the camp must have made every tent sacred. As we walked through the streets of that canvas city, if we had been Israelites and in our right minds, we would have said, "These tents are none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven, for look, Jehovah is in the midst of us! Can't you see the bright light that shines above His sanctuary?" We would have felt that in such a camp all should be holy. The pollution of sin should be unknown there! In such a camp constant prayer and praise should be presented to Him whose Presence was its Glory and defense!

Today let our congregation be a holy convocation—and as for ourselves, let us be holiness unto the Lord! We are consecrated men and women, seeing the Lord has come so very near to us! I spoke of solemnity—I meant not dread and sorrow—but a solemnity full of joy! It is a solemn thing to have God so near, but the joy is equal to the solemnity! Glory be unto God most high, for He is here! Let us spend our days and nights in gladness and delight! God is reconciled to us in the Person of His dear Son and we have fellowship with God in Christ Jesus! Therefore let us rejoice forevermore! Amen and amen!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Exodus 34:1-8; Exodus 40:34-38; John 1:1-18.

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John 1,16 #1169 - The Fullness of Christ the Treas

THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST THE

TREASURY OF THE SAINTS

NO. 1169

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 19, 1874,

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell."

Colossians 1:19.

"And of His fullness we have all received, and Grace for Grace."

John 1:16.

THESE two texts make up a very beautiful sketch of the plan of salvation. Put before your mind's eye the sinner, empty of all holiness, of all hope, despairing and ready to die. Put, also, before your mind, God, full of mercy, willing to come and fill the sinner's emptiness, to bring all His communicable attributes, dwell in that sinner and give him, first, the mercy which can blot out his sin, and then the holiness which can lift him up from his ruined condition. Next note the difficulty in the way—God cannot come as half a God—all His attributes must come together. And should the just God come into this guilty sinner to fill his emptiness, the flame of Justice would destroy him. It is not possible for God, even our God, who is "a consuming fire," to come into contact with that which is sinful without destroying it. What then? Shall the sinner remain empty and shall God's fullness remain uncommunicated?

Behold the plan which infinite Wisdom has devised! The Eternal Son of God becomes Man! The Divine Nature comes in all its fullness and dwells in the Mediator Christ Jesus! Coming into Him, He was made to feel the mighty burning of Justice, which caused Him agony but could not consume Him, for in Him there was no sin. Justice burned and blazed within Him and cast Him into a bloody sweat—yes, brought Him to the Cross and to death because He stood in the sinner's place. But this golden Vessel, though heated, was not melted! It could contain the Divine fire and yet not be destroyed—and now in Christ Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and, moreover, the Divine Nature is in Him in such a way as to be capable of communication to the sons of men. Of course the essence of Deity is not communicated, for that would be to make men into Gods—but we are "made partakers of the Divine Nature" in the sense of receiving the same character—and becoming the children of God. That which God could not bring to us directly by reason of our inability to receive it, He has now brought to us through a Mediator, by placing it in the Man, Christ Jesus, that we, coming to Him, might freely receive of it.

The next step in the plan of salvation is this—that after the fullness of God has come to man in the Person of His Son, everyone that comes to Him by faith receives His Divine Grace. Salvation is not by what you bring to Christ, but by what you take from Him. You are to be receivers first, and then, by-and-by, through the power of Grace, you shall give forth from yourselves rivers of living water to others. In your first coming you come empty, having nothing but your sin and misery—as empty, undeserving sinners you receive of His fullness—and all your life continue to do the same. The Grace already given is not the climax or the conclusion— you go on receiving more and more! Grace increases your capacity for Grace and that enlarged capacity becomes filled! And so the fullness of God comes into you till you are filled with it and you rise from Grace to Glory, being made like unto God and fitted to dwell where He is forever and ever.

Now, unconverted ones, take note that this is the plan of salvation, and the only plan. You must obtain God's love and mercy and holiness by receiving it through the Mediator, Jesus Christ! You have not yet received it—I ask you, How long will you tarry without it? You are, in some degree, aware of your need, for you are not ignorant of the Gospel. Oftentimes you have heard the voice of its invitation and have been almost persuaded to receive the fullness revealed in Christ Jesus. How long will you waver between two opinions? How long will you hesitate? This is the way, the safe way, the suitable way, the only way which is open to you—and it is open to you at this very moment—will your feet never tread it? Will your disobedient steps forever wander, till, at last, you sink in despair and die eternally? God have mercy upon you and bring you to receive of the fullness which the Father has stored up in His Son, Jesus Christ!

Needy Sinners, I warn you, do not insult the fullness of Christ by thinking that you are full enough yourselves! Never think of putting your own righteousness side by side with the Divine, nor think of mixing your tears with Jesus' blood, nor of bringing your prayers or your faith to increase the all-sufficiency of Christ's atoning Sacrifice! He needs nothing from you! Come and take everything from Him, for all fullness dwells in Him. As you may not insult His fullness, so I pray you, do not neglect it. Do not stand by this Fountain and refuse to drink. Do not pass by the riches of His Grace as though they were nothing to you, lest haply, when you come to die, your heart should be wrung with terrible remorse because you have despised the Savior's love. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Put not off these matters from month to month, but, "today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Hasten now unto the place where God Himself has come to meet you—namely, in the Person of His Son.

Moreover, as I charge you not to neglect the Grace of our Lord Jesus, so would I encourage you not to distrust it. All fullness dwells in Jesus—a fullness which is meant to be given out to all who receive it as the gift of Divine Grace! Believe in this fullness and, empty as you are, do not despair any longer when you remember that Jesus has a supply for every possible need. Come, though your head is bowed with grief, for Jesus never did reject a sinner and he never can. It is His office and calling to cleanse the guilty and to receive the lost. Come to Him, now, and may we, before this service is done, be able, all of us, to sing, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," and, "of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace." Let not these words be forgotten by those for whom they are meant. But still, I have not taken my text, this morning, with the view of so preaching from it. I have another aim altogether. Moreover, it will be right for me to say that I do not intend to go into an exposition of these texts, having explained them several times before. I have only taken them with one object, namely, to address myself vehemently to the

servants of God— that they may be exhorted to lay hold of the fullness of the power and holiness which dwell in their Covenant Head.

During this last week I have given to my Brothers in the Conference, a motto which lay on my own heart. It is, "Forward! Upward!" These are the watchwords of this morning—Forward! Upward! I want you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to see that every preparation is made for greater growth and greater success. I want you to be encouraged to seize upon that which lies before you, but which is too often treated as if it did not exist, and to rise, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, to something higher than you have, up to now, accomplished or even attempted.

I. My first point this morning is this—THERE IS A GLORIOUS FULLNESS IN JESUS. Brothers and Sisters, if it is so, why are we so weak, unfurnished and unhappy? There is an infinite fullness in Jesus! A fullness of all that any saint can ever need to enable him to rise to the highest degree of Divine Grace. If there is anything lacking for the attainment of the Divine image in us, it is not a deficiency Christward—it is occasioned by shortcomings in ourselves. If sin is to be overcome, the conquering power dwells in Him in its fullness. If virtue is to be attained, sanctifying energy resides in Christ to perfection. If I see before me an eminent child of God, whose conversation is in Heaven, I may not dare to say that I am not capable of being as sanctified as he is—for the same Lord is mine as well as his.

I have in my flesh no power whatever, for I am emptiness itself. In me the Truth of God is realized, "Without Me you can do nothing." But, on the other hand, the power to do all things lies in Christ and the power to become fully consecrated streams forth from Him. "With God all things are possible." "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and they who dwell in Him shall find things impossible with man become simple everyday facts with themselves if they will but have faith in the mediatorial fullness.

Beloved, I am going to say nothing but what you all know. And I do not mean to garnish it with finery of words. The truth is that there are many who are barely Christians and have scarcely enough Grace to float them into Heaven. The keel of their vessel is grating on the gravel all the way. My prayer is that we may reach deep waters and have so much Grace that we may sail like a gallant ship on the broad ocean with a glorious cargo on board and all colors flying—and so there may be administered unto us an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Everything is provided for this. Christ has not merely placed enough bread on the table to keep us from starving, His oxen and fatlings are killed—He has spread a royal feast.

He has not provided a scanty garment which may barely hide your nakedness, but He has brought forth the best robe and has procured earrings for your ears, jewels for your necks and a royal crown for your heads—for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell for all His saints. If you have not these riches, the fault lies with yourself. It is there—you might have it if you had but faith to take it. Too often we sit down like beggars on the dunghill and groan and cry because of the poverty of our nature when we ought to be rejoicing in the Lord. I thank God that we can groan, for that is something! But there is a more excellent way—a better gift to be earnestly coveted. In Christ you are rich to the fullness of riches! Get up, I pray you, to the high places and realize for yourselves the fullness of God in Christ Jesus!

The fullness which dwells in our Lord we may rest assured is sufficient for the conquest of the world. It is not enough for you or me that we should be wholly consecrated to Christ—our desire is that the whole world should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord! We can never be satisfied while there remains one sinner unsaved, one idol upon its pedestal, or one single error to darken the minds of men. For Christ we do not desire England, only, and the civilized nations, but we claim for Him the darkest dens of cannibalism and the vilest haunts of piracy. The banner of the Cross shall wave where now black flags poison the breeze! It shall be lifted high where today Kalee and Juggernaut set up their ensigns, for the Lord God Omnipotent shall reign from shore to shore!

We have in Christ Jesus all the might which is needed for subduing the nations, for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. We have, dear Brothers and Sisters, I fear, too often been considering the amount of money and the number of men which would be needed. Indeed, I remember a remarkable paper being read explaining to us how much money it would require to evangelize the world—a calculation which I regarded as vanity of vanities and nothing more—for if mountains of money were put before us it might just as well be shoveled into the infernal deep for all the good it could do—if regarded as at all essential! Our checkbook needs more golden treasure and, thank God, we have it!

Depend upon it, when the Church is fit to be trusted with money, she will have it. Pecuniary straitness is only an index of lack of Divine Grace and is so far a good thing, because it brings before us in palpable form our real poverty before the Most High. But Brothers and Sisters, for the conquest of the world, the strength lies in the man Christ Jesus, since in Him all fullness dwells! And in Him we have all the necessary power at our disposal. We are never to say, "Those thieves and criminals are too depraved to be converted," for in our Lord there is fullness of power to convert the most abandoned! We are not to say, "That alley in the darkest part of the city will never be cleansed from its abominations." Jesus could cleanse Sodom, itself! We are never to leave a tribe of savages unevangelized because they are too degraded, nor are we to quail before an uneducated and subtle nation because it is too skeptical—all power for all cases is in Jesus—He is the armory of the house of David! In Him we shall find a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men! Let us go to the armory and we shall receive the invincible weapons of our Holy War, yes, and the strength with which to wield them—the might which ensures victory! Beloved, the text puts away from us, as far as the east is from the west, every conceivable objection that may be raised as to what a saint can do, for surely the very thought of difficulty is rendered absurd by the fact of all fullness residing in our Lord on our behalf! It is not a fullness for merely teaching, but a fullness for convincing! It is not a fullness for simply convincing of sin, but for converting and bringing to full salvation! It is not a fullness for justifying the Believer, alone, but a fullness for sanctifying him—and not a fullness for sanctifying him merely for a little while—but a fullness to keep him to the end! It is a fullness which can fill him with all the fullness of God! Come to whatever place you may, you shall not say, "Here I am at a nonplus," but there will you find a new illustration of the might of the eternal God which dwells in Christ Jesus!

The fact is, Beloved, we have a superabundant force in Christ and if we did but know it, instead of talking about the struggles of the Church and the strain that is put upon us to hold our own, the joy of the Lord would give such strength to us that we should not remember our own efforts, but like the flood which rushes down the mountain after the rain, the flush of life from Jesus would speed

on with a tremendous force, leaping over every obstacle and filling our souls to the brim! God grant us to feel that we do not serve a little Christ nor a stingy Lord. Our God is the God of the hills as well as the valleys! And in the strength of the Lord Omnipotent we triumph in every place! Only let us serve God in real faith and we know not what we may live to see!

God grant us to know this first Truth of God that there is a fullness in Christ—and in the strength of that fullness we may cry—"Forward and upward!"

II. The next encouraging fact is that THE FULLNESS IS IN JESUS NOW. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." The glory of the past exercises a depressing influence upon many Christians. "We have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us the wondrous things which You did in their day and in the old time before them." But we dolefully complain that the golden age of Christianity is over—its heroic times are matter of history. Indeed, this feeling is transformed to fact, for scarcely any Church now existing realizes that it can do what its first promoters did! All appear to be quite sure that these are bad times and but little is to be done in them. We do not expect, nowadays, to find a Methodist so full of fire as the first field preachers. The Quakers are never as fanatical and even the Primitives are not Ranters now! The old reproach has ceased because the old ardor which provoked it has cooled down. So far so bad.

I see grave cause for sorrow in all this. A people are in an evil case when all their heroism is historical. We read the biographies of former worthies with great wonder and respect. But we do not attempt to follow in their steps with equal stride. Why not? It has pleased the Father that in Jesus all fullness should dwell, a fullness for Paul, a fullness for Luther, a fullness for Whitfield, and blessed be God, a fullness for me and a fullness for you! All that Jesus has given forth has not exhausted Him! Christianity has not lost its pristine strength—we have lost our faith—there's the calamity! Oh, ignoble sons of glorious sires, you have degenerated, but not your Master! And if, even in your degeneracy, you would cast yourselves upon your unchanging God, you would rise to more than the strength of your sires and do yet greater things than they!

The fullness of Jesus is not changed. Then why are our works so feebly done? Pentecost, is that to be a tradition? The reforming days, are these to be only memories? I see no reason why we should not have a greater Pentecost than Peter saw and a Reformation deeper in its foundations, and truer in its building up than all the reforms which Luther or Calvin achieved! We have the same Christ, remember that! The times are altered, but Jesus is the Eternal and time touches Him not. "But we are not such men as they." What? Cannot God make us such? Are we weaker than they? The fitter to be instruments for the mighty God! Away with the cowardice which thinks the past is never to be outdone! Is not the Lord of Hosts with us? Is anything too hard for Him? We must labor to eclipse the past as the sunlight eclipses the brightness of the stars!

The mass of professors have their eyes only on the future. The good times are coming, by-and-by, but they are not here yet. We look forward with much hope to the golden age that is to be, when we shall see the fullness of Jesus and nations will be born in a day! Brothers and Sisters, does my text say, "It pleased the Father that in Him all fullness shall one day dwell"? No, but, "in Him should all fullness dwell." Whatever has been done can be done now—and whatever shall yet be done, can be done today, by His Grace. Our laziness puts off the work of conquest. Our selfindulgence procrastinates. Our cowardice and lack of faith make us dote upon the millennium instead of hearing the Spirit's voice today! Happy days would begin from this hour if the Church would but

awake and put on her Strength, for in her Lord all fatness dwells.

When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? Some doubting ones say, "We do not wonder that there is success in such a place," but we cannot have it. We hear of earnest ministers and we conclude that where they labor God will send the blessing, but not to our ministry. We conclude that when yonder woman gathers the young people around her, it is no wonder that blessing comes. Does Christ depend on ministers or on holy women? Have you said, "Alas, I cannot have the blessing." Why not? How dare you limit the Holy One of Israel? You who dwell in towns where all is cold around you, do you despair? Is it in your minds that Christ is dependent upon the circumstances in which He has placed His servants? "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." What if the servants are empty—their Master is not! If the means of Grace lack power, Grace from above is still Omnipotent. Only fly to the Fountain and the dried up streams need not distress you.

Furthermore, our Churches believe that there is a great fullness in Christ and that sometimes they ought to enjoy it. The progress of Christianity is to be by tides which ebb and flow. There are to be revivals like the spring and these must alternate with long lethargies like the winter. O accursed Unbelief, will you always pervert the Truth of God? Will you never understand this Word of God—"It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell"? It is not the Lord's purpose that a fullness should reside in Jesus during revivals and then withdraw. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! The highest state of revival should be the normal condition of the Church. When her martyrs are most selfsacrificing, her missionaries most daring, her ministers most bold, her members most consecrated, she is, even then, below her standard—she has not fully reached her high calling—to come down from her position would be sin!

God grant us Grace to feel that we have not to drink of an intermittent spring, nor to work for Christ with an occasional industry—but as all fullness dwells in Him—it is ours to believe that today we can have all the blessing of a true revival! That today we can go forward in the power of God! That at this very hour we lack for nothing which can lift the Church into her highest condition of spirituality and power! God grant us to receive Grace for Grace today!

III. Thirdly, THE POSITION OF THIS FULLNESS IS RICHLY ENCOURAGING TO US IN THE MATTER OF OBTAINING IT. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." Brothers and Sisters, you have heard what we have said about the fullness—our words are very poor and poverty-stricken compared with the fact—but listen! The fullness is placed where you can receive it—where you can receive it now, for it is placed in Him who is your Brother—bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh! It dwells in Him who loves to give it, because, as our Head, He delights to communicate with His members!

The plenitude of Divine Grace dwells in Him who is, Himself, yours! Since He is yours, all that is in Christ is yours! You need not pray as if you had no inheritance in the blessing which you seek. Christ is the Trustee of the fullness of God and the property of it is vested in His people— you have only to ask of Him and He will give you that which is yours, already! Why do you hesitate? How can you linger? The Father has placed His Grace in Christ because it gratifies His love to His Son. It pleases the heart of the great God to see Jesus adorned with the fullness of Deity and every time Jesus gives to Believers, the great heart of God is gladdened! How can you hesitate about receiving it if it pleases God for you to partake in it? You may go with great spirit and

comfort, since Jesus Himself is honored by your going to Him. He obtains Glory by distributing of His fullness to empty sinners, who, when they receive Grace, are sure to love Him—how can you think Him reluctant to bestow the gift which will increase His Glory?

Do you not know, too, that when you go to Christ, you gain even by the act of going? I am so thankful that Christ has not put my fullness in myself, for then I should not require to go to Him so often, or if I did go to Him I should not have an errand to go upon of such importance as to justify my seeking an audience. But now, every time I get to Christ's door I can plead necessity. We go to Him because we must go. When is there an hour when a Believer does not need to receive from Jesus? Go, then, Beloved, since it blesses the Church, it honors Christ, it pleases God and it is the way of soul enrichment for yourselves! What place of resort could be so attractive as the Person of the Well-Beloved? If God had put His fullness into an angel, we should not feel greatly drawn to him—but since He has caused it to dwell in Jesus, He has put it where we love to have it— where we feel at home, where we are glad to go often! Yes, where we would love to abide and never to go away, but to be forever receiving of Him.

I delight to think that this fullness is placed in Christ because He is the Man who receives sinners and, therefore, you saints who have lost your evidences, you Believers who have acted inconsistently and have not lived up to your privileges, you may say, "we cannot go for this fullness to God, Himself, but we will joyfully go to the Savior of sinners." If you have been, till now, self-deceived, and your experience has all been a mistake, you can still come to the sinner's Savior, to whom the thief looked up in his expiring hour—and from whom your first mercy came! Come, Brothers and Sisters, why do you hesitate? Why do you linger? You who know what Christ is, come, I pray you, with swift feet to the place where all you need is stored—and take all your heart requires! Yes, come for the highest degrees of Grace and for the largest measures of success—and you shall have them, for Christ delights to give exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

IV. And now I have to pass on to another argument. I want to use each head as a hammer—and may God's own Spirit wield it. The next is this, that FROM THIS FULLNESS WE HAVE, MANY OF US, ALREADY RECEIVED. Is not that an argument for still further exercising faith in Jesus? I know of no argument equal to that of practical experience. They must come who have come before! The sweetness of this honey remains upon the tongue and we long for more and cannot be satisfied till we have taken up the dripping honeycomb once again.

Now, see, Beloved, the text says, "Of His fullness we have all received." That is, all the saints in former days have received of this fullness. There was not in John any good thing but what he received from his Master. There was not in the noble martyr Stephen one grain of courage but what he received from Christ. Paul, Apollos, or Cephas—these had nothing but what they took from Him If they received everything, why should we hesitate to do the same? Of ourselves it is also true that all our Graces came from Jesus. This is true of the greatest saint and true of the least. Do you remember when you first received Divine Grace? It brings to my mind right joyful memories of the hour when first these eyes looked to Him and were lightened—when I received pardon from His dying love and knew myself forgiven!

Since your conversion, dear Brothers and Sisters, everything good you have ever had, you have received from our Lord. What? Have you drunk out of your own cistern? What treasure have you

found in your own fields? Nakedness, poverty, misery, death—these are the only possessions of Nature. But life, riches, fullness, joy—these are gifts of Divine Grace through Jesus Christ! Are you accepted before God? He justified you! Have you been kept? He has preserved you! Are you sanctified? He has cleansed you by His blood! Do you know, by full assurance, your interest in the Father's love? He gave you that assurance! All you have and all you ever will have—all that every saint that shall ever be born shall have that is worth having comes out of the fullness of Christ! The crowded ranks of the white-robed above, without exception, confess, "Of His fullness we have all received." I hear them sing, this morning, as they keep a glorious Sabbath Day above—and this is one sweet stanza of their song, "Of His fullness we have all received, and Grace for Grace." Come then, Brothers and Sisters, what prevents us from receiving? "Ah," you say, "I cannot imagine that I can be a Christian of the highest type." Why not? Have you not received life? Why should you not receive life more abundantly? Have you not already been pardoned? Why should you not have the full assurance of that pardon? Have you not already been taken up from the horrible pit and out of the miry clay? What hinders but that Christ should set you upon a rock and put a new song into your mouth and establish your goings?

"But I cannot hope to be so useful as some are." Why not? According to your faith so shall it be to you! God has given you one convert, why cannot He give you a hundred? You have been blessed to a dear child in Sunday school and you have rejoiced over that one jewel as a precious Godsend! Why should you not dive, again, and bring up other pearls for your Immanuel's crown? I would stir in you a sacred ambition! I would provoke you to the highest style of Christian manhood and the most heroic form of Christian service! What you have received is the pledge of what you may receive, but, indeed, you have already obtained a good deal more than yet remains to be received!

Christ is yours and by that fact all things are yours! What you now need is included in what you already have! You only need to realize it—by faith call it your own—and practically to live upon it. May God enable you to do so! Of His fullness have we all received—why should we not receive more?

IV. The last blow of the hammer shall be this—THE GIFTS WE HAVE ALREADY HAD ARE NOT TRIFLES, for John says we have received "Grace for Grace," which is a mode in the Greek language of expressing the superlative. We have received the highest Grace, superlative Grace. The gift of Jesus Christ is the highest Grace that even God, Himself, can bestow— nothing can go beyond that! Listen to this, then—"He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" I charge you, let that text enter into your hearts—and when you feel straitened in prayer and tempted to say, "No, not here, I cannot rise so high, I am not qualified for that attainment"— do, I pray you, remember the gifts already received by which Jesus opens your mouth and bids you ask great things.

The Father has given you His Son! How can He deny you anything? The expression, "Grace for Grace," may mean Grace answering to Grace— Grace which was in accordance with Grace already given—Grace preparatory to what is yet to come. Has not the Father given you such Divine Grace as you had capacity to receive? If there had been more room you would have had more. If you had exercised more faith, He would have given you more joy. If you had possessed more hope, you would have had more realization. He has always come up to, and even gone

beyond, the measure of our expectation. Is there, in your soul, this morning, an enlargement? I feel it in my own heart! I feel a dissatisfaction with my present attainments! I pant to know my Lord better! I am discontented with what I have done for Him up to now! I long to do 10 times more for His Glory!

Do you feel the same? Oh, then He will keep in touch with you! Yes, He will do exceeding abundantly above all you ask, or even think! That text does not say, "Above what you can ask or think," as people will persist in saying. That is not true because we can ask and can think as great things as God Himself will give, and He means us to ask before He gives. Our capacity for asking is, as a general rule, the measure of His giving, but the Scriptures say He will do exceeding abundantly above what you ask or think. Now, are you thinking great things and asking great things? Do not be afraid! The Lord will not let you outstrip Him! Be enlarged—and as large as your faith—so large shall the blessing be.

Then, dear Friends, Grace for Grace may mean Grace upon Grace, like Pelion upon Ossa—one mountain piled upon another—each Grace eclipsing the light of that which went before. This we have already known. When we first believed in Christ, pardon for sin seemed everything. But when we came to know that we were justified in Christ Jesus, that appeared to be a much greater blessing. And when we understood that we were adopted and were the sons of God, that new delight surpassed the former joy! The Lord has led you into Divine Grace which has surprised you and lifted you up from one point to another. I speak to many Brothers and Sisters here who must confess that their present state is very different from their Christian infancy—they now know what they never thought they could know. Why, there are doctrines that some of you can enjoy this morning which you used to think frightfully high doctrines! You once could not appreciate them, yet they are simplicities to you now! And there are conquests over sin which you could not have achieved in your boyhood. But now in your Christian manhood you can take up dragons and destroy them.

Now, dear Brethren, as you have been surprised with mercy, you are to be surprised with more mercy, and the Lord says to you, "Son of man, I will show you greater favors than these." Greater joys are yet to be known! You have entered the room of silver—that inner door will lead you to a chamber of gold! And beyond that there is a door in the wall which he that is taught of God shall open—a door which will admit you into a chamber of diamonds! And when you shall come there and have seen the Glory and the exceeding riches of the Grace of God, there is still an inner chamber where that which eye has not seen nor ear heard shall be revealed to you—a joy unspeakable, unthinkable, indeed! May we comprehend with all the saints what are the heights and depths—and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. We have a fullness in Christ as Believers which we ought to use in the following manner —First, believe in great things! Do not sit down, as some do, in the little Meeting House where about 50 Brethren meet and expect the Lord to send a convert once every 12 months. And when He does send him, they worry him by the month together for fear he should not be one of the right sort! And when he finally comes in, they rejoice over him as one that finds great spoil in having picked up one solitary soul after 12 months' ministry!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we have a greater God than this would imply! The little narrow thoughts which Christians have had as to the success of the Gospel cannot have come from a great God, can they? The day was when the very idea of sending the Gospel to the heathen was regarded by our orthodox Brethren as a piece of Don Quixotism, not to be attempted, and even now, if you say, "All the world for Jesus," they open their eyes and say, "Ah, we are afraid you are tainted with universal redemption, or are going off to the Arminian camp." God grant these dear Brethren new hearts and right spirits—at present their hearts are too small to bring Him much glory! May they get larger hearts, hearts something like their Lord's—and may they have Grace given them to estimate the precious blood at a higher rate—for our Lord did not die to buy a few hundred souls, or to redeem to Himself a handful of people! He shed His blood for a number which no man can number—and His elect shall excel in multitude the sands which belt the sea!

Let us have great faith in what God intends to do. Believing these great things, let us expect them. Be on the qui vive for spiritual miracles. Expect to see hundreds converted! Wonder, when you hear a Gospel sermon, that the Holy Spirit does not save 3,000 by it! "Ah," says one, "I should be very much astonished if He did." I know you would, and that is why we do not see it! But we ought to wonder that there are not, and when we are as we should be, we shall see greater things than these! There is no weakness with God! That limping sinew is in Jacob's thigh, it is not in the Angel's. That palsied arm is man's, not God's—no sinew of His arm can decay.

Sirs, do you think that He who smote the fields of Zoan with plagues is not Lord of idols and King of heathens? Do you think that He who divided the Red Sea cannot lead His people like a flock through the wilderness and bring them into the promised possession? Do you think that He cannot bring up His Church out of her bondage and set her feet in a large room? The Lord of Hosts is with us! Therefore let us expect things! Expecting great things, let us attempt great things! Let us each set about doing something for Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit! Let us try what can be done! Let us not, if we are Sunday school teachers, be satisfied with going through the day's lesson and feeling, "There, that will do." Aim at the immediate conversion of every child in the class!

Do not let us say, as we go round with the tracts this afternoon, "We will leave them and not say a word." Aim at getting a word about Jesus Christ with every person you meet with! As for myself, the preacher, let me come here to preach to you, not with the hope that perhaps, here and there, one will find a Savior, but with an earnest cry to Heaven that the Holy Spirit will comprehend, in the lines of His electing and redeeming love, the whole mass of you, and make this Tabernacle into a golden casket in which all of us shall be the jewels, and take it right up and keep it in His bosom forever!

Last of all, let us not talk about this, but let us set about doing it! Shall we never have, in our midst, men who will go among the heathen to preach Jesus Christ? We had two lately, are there not two more? Young men and young women, will you not consecrate yourselves to the Lord and go into exile for His sake? Have we none such? We have here, this morning, good women and good men, too, who are at work among the heathens of the east end of London and the worst parts of our city. Are there no others to do the same? There is room for scores of you to be as devoted to God as our dear Brother, Dr. Barnardo, or our Sister, Miss MacPherson—and why not you? Why should not the same anointing come upon you and qualify you for useful work?

Will you not, this very day, preach Christ in the streets? Will you not consecrate yourselves to be whole burnt offerings unto Christ, for Him to live, for Him to die? O soldiers of the Cross, will you loiter in the march? The enemy still holds citadels which belong to Christ and you, by a desperate push, may seize them! Swift as eagles and strong as lions, press onward and win the victory! Why do you hesitate? The powers of evil linger not! The hosts of Hell are raging—they call up all their strength against the Lord of Hosts—and will you stand back? Have you no courage? Is your blood turned to water? Has the Spirit of God departed from you?

Oh, let it not be so, but may God launch us upon the enemy like thunderbolts from His own Omnipotent hand! And yet may it be seen throughout the world that there are men who have received of the fullness of the Crucified One and who, therefore, can give it forth to others and point them to Him in whom the Father is well-pleased that all fullness shall dwell. The Lord be with you all. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 1:1-34.

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Chapter 66

John 1,16 #3553 - The Fullness and the Filling

THE FULLNESS AND THE FILLING

NO. 3553

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace"

John 1:16.

ONE Sabbath I was staying in an Italian town on the other side of the Alps. Of course, the whole population was Romish. Two or three of us, therefore, being Protestants, held a little service for the worship of God in the simple manner that is our habit. After this, I went out for a walk. The weather being hot and sultry, I sought the outskirts of the town to get to as quiet and cool a spot as possible. Presently I came to an archway at the foot of a hill where there was an announcement that any person who would climb the hill with proper intentions should receive the pardon of his sins and five days' indulgence. I thought I might as well have five days' indulgence as anybody else, and if it were of any advantage, to have it laid by in store. I cannot tell you all I saw as I went, first one way, and then another, up that hill. Suffice it to say that there was a series of little churches, through the windows of which you might look, as one in his boyish days looked through a peepshow. The whole scene and circumstance of the Passion and death of Christ were thus modeled, beginning with His agony in the Garden, where He was represented in a figure as large as life, with the drops of bloody sweat falling to the ground. The three disciples were a stone's throw off, and the rest of the Apostles outside the garden wall. Every feature looked as real as if one had been standing upon the spot! I scrutinized each group narrowly and carefully read the Latin text which served as an index, till I reached the top of the hill, where I saw a garden, just like an English garden, and as I pushed open the door I faced these words, "Now there was a garden, and in the garden there was a new sepulcher." Walking down a path I came to a sepulcher—so I stooped down and looked in—as Peter had done. There, instead of seeing a picture of the corpse of Christ, I read in gilded letters these words—of course, in the Latin tongue—"He is not here, for He is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Passing on, I came to a place where His Ascension was represented. On the summit was a large church, into which I entered. No one was there, yet the place for me had a marvelous interest. High up in the ceiling there swung a rude representation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and round it were statues of the Prophets, all with their fingers pointing up to Him. There was Isaiah, with a scroll in his left hand, on which was written, "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Further on stood Jeremiah, and on his scroll was written, "Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto

My sorrow, which was done unto Me." All round the church I read in great words, that were large enough to be seen, though they were blazoned on the top of the ceiling, "Moses and all the Prophets spoke and wrote concerning Him."

Now, though I cannot take you to see that remarkable sight, which I shall never forget, I would gladly bring before your mind's eye something like it. Suppose that all the saints who lived from the days of Adam, down to the times when Malachi closed the Old Testament—all the saints who lived in Christ's time and then on through the early ages of the Church in the days of Chrysostom, and Augustine, and all the holy men who afterwards gathered around the Reformers, and all who in every place have served God since then—suppose they all stood in one vast circle? To whom do you suppose they would, every one, point? To whom would they all bear witness? Why, with outstretched arm, everyone of them would turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and speak His praise! Could you then enquire into their individual history, you would find among them characters exceedingly diverse, though all remarkably beautiful. Some renowned for courage, others for gentleness. Some for patient endurance, others for diligent labor—and yet all inspired by a common faith—all of them aglow with fervent gratitude! All of them looking with steadfast gaze and intense love towards ONE from whom they had received every gift that profited them—and that One, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of men! The rule would admit of not a single exception. From each man in his own proper position, from every man in his own particular calling, from all the individuals severally in their own personal experience, the innumerable voices—distinct, but blending in chorus— would go up from earth to Heaven, saying, "Of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace." Then I think from the excellent Glory would come a response. The inhabitants of Heaven would echo back the strain, "Of His fullness have we all, the glorified spirits, received, and Grace for Grace." This is the testimony of the Church militant, and of the Church triumphant! Yes, it is the testimony of all who in every place and at every time have come and put their trust under the shadow of His wings!

Our text seems to suggest two thoughts—the fullness and the filling— upon each of which I will attempt to say a little, a very little. With so infinite a theme, we can do no more than children do when they take up a little seawater in a shell—their tiny scoop cannot embrace the ocean. I stand on the narrow edge of a vast expanse and leave the boundless depths to your contemplation! His fullness! An inexhaustible reservoir! Our filling! An illimitable endowment! Beloved, the river of God, which is full of water, can well supply the little canals that are fed from such a fountain with Grace for Grace!

I. I said THE FULLNESS. It is His fullness, the fullness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Oh, what a fullness He has! The fullness which belongs to Him personally! Note this well! Forget it not! Our Redeemer is essentially God. By Nature He is Divine. He has condescendingly taken upon Himself our nature and He is most truly and assuredly Man. Very God! For to Him belong all be attributes of Jehovah. Very Man! For when He took our flesh and blood, He accepted the entire sympathies of our creatureship. In His complex Nature, He possesses fullness. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He has the fullness of Omnipotence and all power is given unto Him as Mediator in Heaven and in earth. Omnipresence is His to perfection, "for where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I (He said) in the midst of them." He has essential wisdom. Even when on earth, "He did not commit Himself, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." In Him is fullness of

justice. The Father has given all judgment unto the Son. "Shall not God judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained, whereof He has given assurance unto all men in that He has raised Him from the dead?" In Him is fullness of mercy, for, "through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The attributes of God make up a perfect total. The unity, with all its uniqueness, is His! Divisions and subdivisions are ours. The fractional parts of which we take account are but the breaking up of a great fact to our weak understanding. Think as you may, your thoughts cannot describe or compass God, for God is all that is good and blessed! And as is God, so is Christ—all the Divine Attributes are contained and represented in Christ Jesus in their fullness—not diminished by His humiliation, but resplendent by His triumph!

"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead." He is the express Image of the Father's Person, the brightness of His Father's Glory—not more Glory—but the brightness of His Father's Glory. What confidence this ought to inspire in our hearts! The fullness from which you and I derive the Divine Grace we receive is none other than the Infinite fullness of God Over All, blessed forever, whose name is Immanuel, God With Us! There was also a fullness in Christ in respect to His Manhood. Nothing was lacking to Him that is involved in being by Nature and Constitution a perfect Man. He was pure. He did not inherit any sin. His disposition did not tend towards any evil. Still, all that pertains to the original creatureship of man as created by God did Christ possess in the fullness of

Volume 63 3development. Hence, my Brothers and Sisters, there is in Him at this moment a fullness of sympathy. He is not such a High Priest as cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin! Do not suppose that Jesus is less human than you are, yourselves—He is fully human. Do not imagine that He is less tender than you would be towards the weak and suffering—He is full of tenderness. His heart melts with love. A mother has often a tenderness that we do not find in a father. Masculine strength and courage do not always blend with the gentle, sympathetic qualities of woman. Howbeit when God created man in His own image, male and female created He them. The virtues, if I may say so, of both sexes were combined in our Lord—the suavity as well as the staunchness—the feminine as well as the masculine of our common humanity! Human nature in its totality and completeness was fully possessed and thoroughly represented by Him. The sympathetic nature which melts at a tear and smiles at the joy of others, was as truly His as the heroic nature that parleys not with fear, but acts with promptitude and suffers with fortitude, like a warrior in the hosts of the Lord! There is thus a fullness of humanity as well as a fullness of Divinity in Christ Jesus, our Savior—a fullness of perfection in His blessed Person which may well fix your trust and rivet your admiration!

In our Lord, likewise, there is what I may venture to call, for lack of a better word, an acquired fullness. He has sojourned on earth and rendered entire and undeviating obedience to the Law of God, having taken upon Himself the form of a Servant, and by His righteousness earned wages—a fullness, an everlasting wellspring of merit! Throughout His whole life He honored the Divine Law and glorified God on the earth. In doing His Father's will, His action was so voluntary and so vicarious, that He has accumulated an inexhaustible fund of merit which all of us who believe in His name may plead before the Father's Throne. More especially did His death consummate the obedience and constitute its sterling worth, its intrinsic virtue. His death, with all its surroundings—from the bloody sweat in the Olive Garden to the last cry, "Into Your hands I

commend My spirit"—was sublime. All through the scourging and the spitting, the shame, the wounding, His Crucifixion, the thirst, the desertion and the death, itself, He was working out an Atonement for us—

"Bearing, that we might never bear His Father's righteous ire."

And now with Him risen from the dead, raised to the right hand of the Majesty on high, there is a fullness of prevalence in His intercession when He pleads His blood—a fullness of cleansing power when the Spirit applies the blood to the guilty conscience—a fullness of peace to the heart when His blood speaks better things than that of Abel! In that fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins there is a fullness that never can be exhausted by all the sin of man! He has finished the work which His Father gave Him to do. Now the Covenant is ratified with Him that He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. In these respects we are convinced that there is an acquired as well as a personal fullness in our precious Lord!

No less has He a fullness of dignity, of high prerogative. He is a Prophet. By Him are all His people taught, warned, counseled and encouraged with a blessed hope. He is a Priest, and by Him they are cleansed from sin and consecrated to God. Moreover, He is also a King, spreading the patronage of protection over all His liege subjects and ordaining peace for them. Under His beneficent rule, they prosper! You good Shepherd! You great Shepherd of the sheep! There is no office or obligation that was necessary for our welfare, but You have taken it and undertaken it on our behalf! You are to us all that we require and all that we could desire! Join all the qualities involved in name or fame that commend themselves most closely to your heart, because they meet your necessities, or draw forth your sympathies, and you shall find that He comprises them all in liberal, lavish fullness! Nor has His prerogative any limit. As a Priest, who has once offered a Sacrifice of everlasting prevalence, His absolution or His benediction is final and irrevocable! As a Prophet, His authority is unimpeachable—the authority with which He teaches allows of no appeal. As a king, He has right as well as might on His side. In the midst of Zion, willing subjects yield to His beneficent sway! In the outer world, reluctant rebels must submit themselves to His scepter! He is no Priest whose vain pretense has no valid prescript. He is no Prophet whose teaching is uncertain in its tone, or limited in its range. He is no King whose prerogative is not sanctioned by His wisdom and whose government awakens no fealty of love. But in the administration of all His offices, our Lord Jesus Christ shows a fullness of qualification and gives a fullness of satisfaction! In such respects He has no rival—nor is there any room for a rival to arise!

And let me say here that the power with which our Lord exercises these offices may well command our devout confidence. Do you need to learn the truth? Oh, come to the Prophet of Nazareth, and you shall find that there is a satiety of truth in His teaching such as was never found in heathen groups, or even to the same extent in Hebrew Seers! Or do you need acceptance before God. Oh, then, come you to the Priest who is not of the tribe of Levi, but a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, whose royalty confers dignity on His sacerdotal office! He can present your sacrifice with the much incense of His merit that is acceptable before the Throne of God. Or do you need strength? Do you need one to fight your battles, to take hold of the shield and the buckler, draw out the spear and handle the bow? Behold, the Hero of Israel, whose exploits are told

Volume 63 5in your songs—Jesus, the King by right of conquest, as well as by right Divine—has a fullness of power and majesty with which no adversary can overcome! He reigns! His reign is the

consolation of His people, the guarantee of their peace! These are bare outlines. Time would fail me to enumerate all His offices. They are very numerous but, however numerous, Christ possesses them all! He enjoys the prerogatives peculiar to them all in the fullest degree. He possesses the power to exercise them all to the fullest extent!

But in Christ there is verily a blessed fullness of every kind of perfection. Whatever there may be that is lovely or of good repute is to be found in Christ. All that is virtuous or amiable in the character of men—all that is noble and illustrious in the endowments that Heaven bestows on the most privileged of creatures—our Lord possessed. It was said of Henry the Eighth that if all the likenesses of tyrants had been lost out of history, they might have been reproduced out of the one character of that monstrous tyrant-king! So if all the holy features of Patriarchs and Prophets, of saints and martyrs that ever lived were blotted from the canvas of history, they all might be painted afresh from the one life of the Divine Person of our ever-adorable Lord Jesus Christ! In Him there was not only one perfection, but all perfections meet and blend to make up one matchless perfection. There was not one sweet alone in Him, but in Him all sweets combine in a perfect sweetness! John has love, Peter courage, Paul zeal—each saint has his own peculiarity, but in Christ all the qualities of goodness and Grace converge! He exhibits them in the highest degree and the purest harmony. After such manner are they incorporated in Him as to produce a Character the like of which was never known before, nor ever shall be witnessed again!

And never forget that a fullness of the Holy Spirit abides in Christ. The Lord gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him. He has the residue of the Spirit. His is the head upon which the anointing oil is fully poured. We, who are but as the skirts of His garments, are favored with some droppings thereof, but the fullness of the anointing of the Spirit was bestowed upon Jesus Christ our Lord—and from Him, His members must receive the portion they enjoy!

His fullness! I linger on the word, for I revel in the meditation. Such a fullness as admits of no diminution, for it is an abiding fullness! What though all the saints of every age have come to Christ, and drawn their supplies from Him, He is just as full as ever! Think not that those who first came drank of a copious fountain that has been partly drained by the myriads who have since slaked their thirst. The Apostles received of His fullness and so do we! They without prejudice to us—we without prejudice to those who shall follow after us. When I came to Christ 1800 years after the Apostles came, yet I received of the fullness at just the same rate as when Peter, John, or Paul received it. Should this dispensation last another thousand years, and some poor, trembling wretch should come to the foot of the Cross to receive mercy, he will not receive Christ half-full, but He shall receive of Christ's fullness, for it is an abiding fullness! It is never less than full—never can be more than full. In Him there is an Infinity of Grace and Truth. Such fullness is there in Him at all times, under all your circumstances of trial, yes, and under all conditions of sin, too! The fullness of Christ to supply will always exceed the faith of the Believer to seek. And when you feel your emptiness more than you ever did before, then you will set the most store upon His abounding towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Considering, then, His abiding fullness, His inexhaustible fullness, His available fullness, I entreat you to avail yourself of this fullness now without demur, without delay! As there is a fullness, so there is—

II. A FILLING. This is to be our second part. I must speak of it with brevity. "Of His

fullness have we all received." Surely, then, all the saints were empty before! You are empty, my Brother, and so was Abraham, so was Paul. Grace, the free Grace of God, has made all the difference between Peter and Judas, though the one repented and the other despaired—the one traveled the heavenly road—the other went down quickly to Hell. They stood on equal footing in transgression, till Grace made them to differ! What radical difference is there between one man and another from a legal point of view?

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All alike have to come to Christ, empty of merit, or they would never come at all! That was a pretty tale we heard the other day, and it points to a right good moral. A worthy, consistent, industrious woman was married to a low, worthless, dissipated husband. Both of them, however, were alike ignorant of the Gospel. They came together to the House of Prayer. They heard together the tidings of mercy. They each believed and each of them received the Savior—and they both were saved the same way—they both found mercy on the same terms! To the rich, free, Sovereign Grace of God they cried with one another in ascribing the praise. That is a fact. It occurred last week. I do not know whether this makes it more convincing to you, but I might say, as Elihu said to Job, "Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with men, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living!"

Observe that the filling is universal. All the saints partake of it. "Of His fullness have we all received." There are manifold diversities of experience among the Lord's people, but in some things they share and share alike. Some saints do not undergo the stress of trial and tribulation that others pass through. Here, however, there is no partiality. They have,

Volume 63 7everyone of them, received out of Christ's fullness! Not one of them could do without receiving it! Not one of them could receive it from any other hand than that of the Divine Benefactor! They earned it not. They accepted it. They received it from Jesus Christ!

This is peculiar to the saints. While it says, "Of His fullness have we all received," manifestly a certain body of people have become partakers of a privilege which it is no less evident that all men have not received. What thousands and tens of thousands there are who, when invited to the Gospel feast, reject the call, "make a wretched choice, and rather starve than come." "We all!" That is, all of those who have believed! And who are, "we," or what are "we," that such Grace should be given to us in preference to anybody else? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, little cause enough have we for self-satisfaction! On the score of deserving, no choice had ever fallen on us! We were the vilest, the least worthy, the least attractive and, in some respects, the least hopeful! Oh, Grace, it is your practice to come into the unlikeliest hearts, and it is the glory of Divine Love to find in darkest spots a home! "We all"—we who were once dead in trespasses and sins. We who were once lost like the prodigal son, lost like the wandering sheep, lost like the piece of money—we who needed seeking, needed finding, need saving—yet of His fullness have we all received. Recollect that the reception is peculiar to Believers—it does not go beyond them.

Be it clear, however, that there is, and must be, a personal reception in every case. "Of His fullness have we all received." No one of us can receive it transmitted from another, but each one of us receives it directly from Him. Your father's Grace cannot save you! It was a wise speech of the wise virgins. When the foolish virgins said to them, "Give us of your oil," they replied, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." Family piety involves responsibilities, but it cannot stand in the place of personal godliness! Dear

Hearer, you must go to Christ for yourself! All who ever were saved have done so, and you certainly will not be saved unless you are led to do the same! It is a personal filling. "Of His fullness have we all received."

The bounty is gratuitous. Notice the next words, "and Grace for Grace." It is not said, "Of His fullness have we all purchased," nor, "Of His fullness have we all earned a share." It is all passive. We have received. What does the vessel do to fit itself for the water that flows into it? Why, it does nothing! All its doing can fit it to recede is an undoing— that is to say, it empties itself to prepare itself to be filled. Oh, if any of you desire to find Jesus Christ, the doing must be in the way of undoing! You must be emptied to be filled! The preparation is a consciousness that you are not prepared! In such unpreparedness you are prepared for Christ! This is an enigma and a riddle. Those who think themselves prepared for Him are not—but those who know that they are not prepared are just the souls upon whom His Grace will come! Poverty, not riches. Blindness, not sight. Emptiness, not fullness. Sinfulness—not virtue—these are the things Christ looks for. He is come to seek and to save that which was lost—not that which had won victories! Not that which was splendid in its own esteem, but that which was defeated, ruined, lost! If you are lost, He comes to seek and to save such as you are! Oh, you who were once lost, but now are found, bless His name that you have received of His fullness!

"And Grace for Grace!" What do these words mean? We can only just touch them as a swallow with its wing touches the pool—we cannot pretend to enter into their depth. "Grace for Grace." Does that mean that those who receive Grace under the old dispensation were afterwards led to receive the Grace of the new dispensation? Does it mean that we who have the Grace of conviction, with the Holy Spirit as a spirit of bondage, shall receive, by-and-by, the spirit of liberty, and get out of conviction, through conversion, into full pardon and enjoyment of peace with God? Is that the Grace, when Grace turns into Glory and we come before the Throne of God? Does it mean Grace by degrees—Grace upon Grace—a little Grace to begin with, and more Grace afterwards? "He gives more Grace." Grace following on Grace and, further on, superabounding Grace, when Grace turns into Glory and we come before the Throne of Grace forever and ever? Does it mean that God leads us on, step by step, adding to our spiritual wealth, initiating us first into simple things and afterwards leading us into deeper matters? "Grace for Grace."

Yes, it means that, but it means more! God gives Grace in preparation for further Grace—the Grace of a broken heart—to make room for deep repentance and abhorrence of sin! The Grace of hatred of sin to make way for the Grace of holy and careful walking, humiliation and faith in Jesus! The Grace of careful walking to make room for the Grace of close communion with Christ! The Grace of close communion with the Lord Jesus Christ to make room for the Grace of full conformity to His Image! Perhaps the Grace of conformity to His Image to make room for the higher Grace of brighter views of Himself and still closer incomings into the very heart of the Lord Jesus! It is Grace that helps us on in Grace. When a beggar asks you for a penny, and you give him one, he does not ask you for a sixpence. Or if you give him a shilling, he would not consider that an argument why you should give him a sovereign! But you may deal thus with God—if you have only got, as it were, an ounce of Grace, that is a reason why you should then pray God for a greater weight of Grace—and afterwards for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Believe that He gives Grace for Grace—that is, Grace that you may open your mouth for more Grace! The Grace you have expands your

Volume 63 9heart and gives you capacity for receiving yet more Grace. Do you not send your child to school to learn his ABCs? You may call that the Grace of learning his alphabet. Yes, but it is preparatory to his learning to read the spelling book. Well, but why does he learn to read the spelling book? Why, that is a preparation for something else! So one Grace gives us a preparation for another Grace, and thus as we have more Grace, we realize the blessedness of this Divine filling out of His fullness!

Or, suppose we read the passage thus—Grace answerable to Grace? Even this will admit of two constructions. Let God give me Grace to be a preacher—He will surely give me Grace to discharge the office! Perhaps He has given you Grace to teach in a Sunday school? Then you need a further supply of Grace to enable you to be an efficient teacher! Perhaps you have the Grace of resignation to suffer for Christ's sake. You will need the Grace of patience to support you in the midst of pain or persecution! You are called to pray, and you yield yourself up to be a wrestler with God in prayer. This is a great Grace. Oh, may you have Grace answerable to that Grace, that when you get with the Angel by the brook Jabbok, you may take hold of His strength, plead His promise, His Covenant, His oath and never let Him go until He blesses you! Thus, a halt and fainting Jacob comes off as a prevailing Israel! May we thus always have Grace answerable to Grace! "Grace for Grace" may imply Grace received by us answerable to the Grace that is in Christ. Oh, that we Christians had Grace in some measure commensurate with the Grace that is treasured up for us in Him! All that is in Him belongs to you. Then the degree of your daily supplies ought to be proportionate to His ample, unlimited wealth and fullness!

A young heir to a large estate, though not of full age, generally gets an allowance made to him by the executors, or the trustees, or the Court of Chancery, suitable to the position he is presently to occupy. If he has £100,000 a year in prospect, he would hardly be limited to a penny a week, like a poor man's child. We cannot suppose that he would have a mean allowance made him such as would barely enable him to live in a humble cottage on the rich domain he is entitled to. Oh, no, that would be a meager pittance out of all proportion to his position. When I see one child of God always mourning, another always doubting, and yet another always scheming—I feel a kind of disappointment—I see they are living below their privileges! They do not seem to have Grace in possession answerable to the Grace they have had. We always advocate propriety, on the part of all our people, of living within their incomes, but I will defy the child of God to live beyond his income in a spiritual sense! You that have but little spending money are like the elder brother in the parable. You say, "You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." And your Father replies, "Son, you are always with Me and all that I have is yours." If you do not have it, it is your own fault—it is all there and is freely yours! You have but to ask, and you shall receive—to seek, and you shall find. Oh, could we once get Grace in us at all like the Grace that is in Christ, what Christians we would be! No longer starlight Christians and moonlight Christians, but sunlight Believers, letting our light shine before the sons of men! Oh, to be among the three Mighties of our royal David! May each of us covet such a position as this and God grant it to us for His love's sake!

"Grace for Grace" obviously means Grace in abundance. Like the waves of the sea, when one comes, there is another close behind it. Before you can say that one is gone, there is another coming to fill its place. There they come. Who shall count them? In long succession, wave follows wave. So is God's Grace. "Grace for Grace." One Grace has hardly come into your soul but there

is another one! You have heard the story of Rowland Hill having a hundred pounds entrusted to him for the benefit of a poor minister. He thought that if he sent him the hundred pounds, it would be too large a sum to give him all at once—he would scarcely know how to handle it and, perhaps, he would not be as thankful for it as if he had it doled out in smaller amounts. So he sent him five pounds, and wrote in the letter, "More to follow." Letters did not come often in those days of nine penny or eighteen penny postage, but in about another week he forwarded another five pounds, and a note with it, "More to follow." After a short interval he did the same, again, still saying, "More to follow." So it went on for a long time, always with, "More to follow," till the dear good man, I should think, must have been at his wits' end to know what could follow when so many good presents came to one who needed them so much!

Now that is just how God has done with me, and I believe He is doing the same with all of you who are His people. He has sent you a mercy and when He has sent it, you might have seen, if you had looked at the envelope, that it was an earnest of further benefits and benefactions— "More to follow." The mercy you have received today has written upon it legibly, "More to follow," and that which will come tomorrow will have upon it, "More to follow." "Grace for Grace." Oh, sing unto Him a new song! Let Him have fresh songs for fresh mercies and, as He multiplies the mercy, so do you multiply the praises you ascribe to His name!

"Grace for Grace!" Does it not mean Grace from Him to produce Grace in us? We receive from the fullness of Christ, of His Grace, in order that it may be a living seed that shall produce Grace in us as its natural fruit! The Grace of gratitude should be produced in us by the Grace of generosity from God. We ought to be gracious with a holy joyfulness for all His goodness. I hope we shall have the Grace of patience under all sufferings and the Grace of zeal in all our labors. At a time like this, my Brothers

Volume 63 11 and Sisters, when we are seeking the conversion of sinners with special efforts, may we have Grace from Jesus that shall make all the Graces fruitful and fragrant in us! So shall we be to the Savior as a garden of olives and pomegranates, of lilies and sweet flowers—and may He take a delight in us! When Cyrus took the Greek Ambassador through his garden, he challenged him to admire its charms. The Spartan approved all he saw, but still his admiration was cool and critical. "This garden," said its master, "yields me more pleasure and satisfaction than you can imagine, or I can express." "And why?" asked the visitor. "Because," replied Cyrus, "I planted every tree in it myself. I planned all the paths and all the flowers have I reared. No hand but mine has dug the soil, tended the plants, pruned the trees, or done anything but my own." As toil and his trouble thus endeared the place to the king, so, truly, Christ can say when He looks upon His people, "There is a fruitful branch there—I pruned that. He was sick, long laid aside from business. He feared his family would be starved—I was pruning him, then, but I love the fruit that is on him because I know how it came there. That plant yonder which is blooming now and shedding such a sweet perfume of love, well do I recollect when it was drooping and ready to die. I came and watered it. She, timid disciple, would say, 'Blessed be the gentle hand that shed the dew and poured nourishment on my poor, parched and withered root!'" Yes, the Savior gives us "Grace for Grace" that we may produce Grace! I leave the thought with you for meditation, and the issues for your edification, only praying that His Holy Spirit may work in you "Grace for Grace."

Oh, that all of you might receive Grace from Him. You will never get Grace anywhere else! Go to Him at once by faith, with humble prayer. Plenteous Grace with Him is found—all the Grace you shall ever require between now and Glory, you shall find stored up in Him! His Grace is our benediction. Of it may you one and all partake! Amen.

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 67

John 1,16 #415 - The Fullness of Christ--Received!

THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST—RECEIVED!

NO. 415

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1861,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"And of His fullness have all we received."

John 1:16.

THERE is no occasion to inform the Christian heart who the Person is to whom reference is here made. The name of Jesus is to you a household word. No, it is the word which will be found written upon your hearts when you die. That immortal word shall be the keynote of your eternal song when you shall enter into the immortality which remains for God's people. Jesus! How sweet is Your name to Your people. It is a sonnet of itself. It is the sum of all music summed up in two syllables. It is a hallelujah and the groundwork of an eternal hosanna in five letters. Jesus! We defy earth to equal it and Heaven itself to excel it. Jesus is Heaven's highest melody—as it is earth's sweetest delight.

The text informs us that there is a fullness in Christ. There is a fullness of essential Deity, for "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead." There is a fullness of perfect Manhood, for in Him bodily, that Godhead was revealed. Partaker of flesh and blood, made in all things like unto His brethren, there was nothing lacking that was necessary to the perfection of humankind in Him. There is a fullness of atoning efficacy in His blood, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleans us from all sin." There is a fullness of justifying righteousness in His life, for "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

There is a fullness of divine Providence in His plea, for "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him; seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." There is a fullness of victory in His death, for through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil. There is a fullness of efficacy in His resurrection from the dead, for by it "are begotten again to a lively hope." There is a fullness of triumph in His ascension, for "when He ascended up on high He led captivity captive and received gifts for men." There is a fullness of blessings unspeakable, unknown. A fullness of grace to pardon, of grace to regenerate, of grace to sanctify, of grace to preserve and of grace to perfect.

There is a fullness at all times. A fullness by day and a fullness by night. A fullness of comfort in affliction, a fullness of guidance in prosperity, a fullness of every Divine attribute, of wisdom, of power, of love. A fullness which it were impossible to survey, much less to explore. There is everything summed up in a total—"the gathering together of all things in One" in Jesus. "It pleased

the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." In vain we strive to recount the holy wonder. It were a theme which would exhaust an angel's tongue to tell—the fullness which resides in Jesus our Head and ever abides to answer our need.

And now what shall we say to these things? "Of His fullness have all we received." The text seems to me to suggest four reflections. First, an appeal to our gratitude. "Glory be to Christ! For of His fullness have all we received." Secondly, a notion of character, "Thus may you know the people of God, for of His fullness have they all received." Thirdly, a sentence of admonition to believers, "Be wise, oh you people of God, be grateful and be humble, for it is of His fullness you have received." And in the last place here is to the sinner a word of sweet encouragement, "Come, all the saints invite you, for of His fullness have all they received."

1. To begin with the first the text constrains us to say, "GLORY BE UNTO CHRIST FOR HIS FULLNESS, for of it have all the saints received."

Appeal to those who died before the flood. Ask those who trod in the steps of Enoch. Go forward to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Put the question to David and Samuel—come on through the Prophets, to Isaiah and Jeremy—ask them all, "From where came your faith? From where your power to suffer and your strength to conquer?" With united breath they answer, "Of His fullness who as yet had not come in the flesh we by faith received." Ask the saints in later times. I summon you, oh you bright Apostles of the Lamb, "From where came your noble testimony and your unwavering constancy?" They reply with the voice of John, their leader, "Of His fullness have all we received."

Appeal to the martyrs on their racks, on their blood-stained gibbets, on their stakes and glowing fires. In their dungeons and damp dying places— ask the tenants of ten thousand graves, "From where came your triumph?" And they reply at once, "We have overcome through the blood of the Lamb." "Of His fullness have all we received." You should go through the list of the Reformers. You should ask Luther and Calvin and Zwingle and Melancthon and Wickliffe and Huss and Jerome and Knox. And there is not one of them who will dare to say that he had anything of his own.

You should turn over the list of the great preachers and summoning them one by one, you should say to Augustine, to Chrysostom, to Bernard and to those in later days, such as Latimer, Tindal and Hooper and to later still the men with Whitfield and with Wesley preached the Word, "From where came your boldness in confession? From where your strength to bear the calumny of the age and to be the butt of human scorn and yet never to flinch, much less to withdraw your testimony." And they all reply, "Of His fullness have all we received."

Brethren, what a fullness must this be—when you think that a multitude which no man can number—a company beyond all human count have all received Him! And there is not one of them that has received too little—they are all, as Rutherford has it—"drowned debtors to His grace." Or, as we put it, "over head and ears" in debt to Him. They are so indebted that they will never know how much they owe but they feel that an eternal song will not be too long to utter their grateful praise. Fullness, indeed, must there be in Him when all these streams have been continually flowing and yet He is not dry—when all there mouths have been filled and yet the granary is not empty. When all these thirsty ones have had their drink and yet the well springs up as free, as rich,

as full as ever.

But you must note again, to the praise of Christ, not only did they all receive of His sense, they all received all that they had. They had not, any of them, a part of their own. No Apostle could say, "So far I am a debtor. But here I stand and claim the honor for myself." With sin begins and ends the whole story of man. But where good appears, there grace begins. Or, rather, the grace began before the good. For every good desire, for every holy thought, for every well-spoken word, for every deed of daring, for every act of self-sacrifice let Christ be honored—for everything has come of Him. If there is any virtue, any praise—anything that is lovely or of good report—go and cast it at His feet, for from Him it came. He sowed the seed out of which it grew. He created the nature out of which these good things sprung.

Oh what must the fullness be from which all the saints received all that they have! But there is another way of estimating the fullness—by remembering that, albeit, all the saints have received all these things, yet it remains undiminished—a fullness still. There is not a drop less in Christ though oceans have been taken away. There is not a spark less in that furnace though many fires have been kindled therefrom. There is not a farthing less in that treasury though millions of souls have been enriched. There is not a grain less in that granary nor shall there be a grain less even when the whole world shall be sown—and all these sheaves shall come to the harvest.

It is always blessed for the child of God to know that in Christ there is enough for all the saints, enough for each, enough for evermore. And when they have had all and everything that they can have still there is as much left as when they began. I noticed in Venice at the wells that the people came to them early in the morning because very soon afterward they were almost dry and it needed some two or three hours for the well to spring up again. Ah, but it is never so with Christ. Come early in the morning, O you thousands of seekers and that well is full—come you at hot noon tide, O you thirsty ones and the well is full—come when the sun is going down, you that are wearied with your day of toil, for the well is ever full.

Ah, come at midnight, you whose sun is set, who are lost in the darkness of despair, for still you shall find that the well is full—never exhausted. No, never diminished—always springing up, always overflowing. So long as there shall be souls found who need to drink of His fullness, the supply shall be abundant.

Though there are many things to say on each division of my subject, you must excuse me if I say but little. You must take the text home and think of it for yourselves. Spirits around the Throne, I hear you sing tonight, "Of His fullness have all we received." Saints on earth, speeding your way to the eternal triumphs, join their song and say, "Of His fullness have all we received." Let no voice be silent, let no tongue be dumb, but let every soul say, "Of His fullness, too, have I received and glory be unto His name."

II. Now for our second point. The text also teaches us HOW TO KNOW WHO IS THE CHRISTIAN, for it says, "Of His fullness have all we received."

There are some in this world who obtain their religion from their fathers and mothers. They go to church, or perhaps to chapel, because there is a family pew there and all their family used to go. They speak about "our church" and "our denomination" as though their grandfather had left his religion in his last will and testament for a legacy to them. Let such know that religion is not to be

inherited. It is a personal matter. No man can stand sponsor for another. One of the most ridiculous and pestilent of human inventions is the idea of making one man stand representative for another, or an adult for a child—everyone must appear before God and be judged for ourselves.

Jesus Christ is the only Surety. Verily, we should have enough to do to answer for ourselves at the last, without attempting to make a reply for other people. To our own Master we must stand or fall. We have a divinely appointed Substitute. Therefore we shall all gather around the judgment seat of Christ. But you have received your grace, you say, from your parent. If you have got it anywhere but from Christ then please remember you do not belong to the family of Christ. Others there are who have a religion of their own—they have got it by good works. They have always acted uprightly. They have shut their shops on a Sunday. They do not cheat—at least not often, not more than other people. They speak the truth and they endeavor to do their best. They would not mind helping a poor neighbor. Or if they are in richer circumstances, their guinea is always ready whenever the subscription list is placed before them. And they say, "Well, if it does not go well with me, it will be hard with a great many people." That is quite correct—indeed it will go very hard with a great many people. But this religion of theirs is of their own making. Then sometimes when men get rich they think they will, as it were, put the finest fruit on the top of the bushel and they leave a donation to some society. A very good plan, indeed, by the way—but a pitiful thing if it is left with the view of getting merit by it. So now they say, "It will all be well—there will be two or three alms-houses built. I have been a good fellow while I have lived and it will surely be well with me at the end."

You do not belong to the same company as the saints who have gone before. You have evidently nothing to do with the Apostle John—for his fullness came from Christ. It is quite apparent you can never share his Heaven. You can never enjoy his bliss. You can never enter into his rest. What he had he owed to grace divine. But it seems what you have is of your own earning. Your robes are of your own spinning, your fire of your own kindling, your coin of your own minting, your merits of your own merchandise. Oh, be not deceived, these things will fail you at the last and you will find them as a dream when one awakes All your fine righteousness shall disappear as a shadow when your conscience is aroused upon your dying bed.

But others have a better sort of religion than this. They do not believe the Calvinistic doctrine—that without Christ we can do nothing. They acknowledge that without Him we cannot do much—still they pretend that with Him they can do just a little. If we cannot save ourselves yet we can believe in our own strength. So they take the first step. They begin the good work in themselves. And then their divines teach them that they must persevere—yes, if they do not, if they will not do their part, God will leave them. The grace of God is dependent upon their good behavior—so they try to behave themselves to keep the grace of God.

They "use the grace of God" as they call it. They try to hold on to the end of themselves. And what does it all come to? To which I say, it is very obvious that you do not belong to those old-fashioned saints who lived in the Bible times—for all they had they received from Christ. They did not get the beginning from themselves—He was Alpha—they did not get the ending—He was Omega. They did not get anything from self. They sought and they found Christ for us. If you had asked an old saint his opinion about salvation he would have replied in the language of Jonah, "Salvation is of

the Lord." Free will doctrines, creature power and human strength, were unknown in Bible times. They were the invention of one Pelagius. They were new vamped and made a little tidy by Van Harmin, called Arminius. There are some who to this day have adopted "these old shoes and clouted upon their feet and old garments upon them and all the bread of their provision is dry and moldy." And they appear like Gibeonites in the Lord's hosts. I do not say but what many of then shall be saved—but they shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water in the midst of the congregation in their days—for they never can come into the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free while they believe those adulterated doctrines, those traditions of men, instead of the doctrine and revelation of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Now, let us try to find out the true Christian—the enlightened Christian. The true Christian has all from Christ. The Heaven-taught Christian feels it is so. You remember that the Apostle Paul said of himself that he was the chief of sinners. A little while before he says he was the least of all the saints and last of all he says, "Though I am nothing." John Newton says, "Young Christians think themselves little—growing Christians think themselves nothing—full-grown Christians think themselves less than nothing." So as we grow up we grow down. As Christ increases we must decrease. As He is glorified, the flesh gets dishonored in our esteem.

Now, what do you say, Brothers and Sisters? Did you receive all the grace you have from Christ? Is He All in All to you? Are you resting wholly and simply and only on Him? Can you say as poor Jack did in that story I once told you—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all, But Jesus Christ is my All in All!"

Have you learned to depend on Him for all things and on self for nothing? Have you seen the rottenness and emptiness of all human merit? Have you learned the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of all human trust? If so, rejoice, for you belong to that company who can say, "Of His fullness have all we received."

Sometimes the devil will say to us, "Well, you do a great deal in the cause of Christ. You do not have a moment's rest from the moment you wake in the morning to the time you go to sleep at night—always thinking of something for Christ and doing something for Him." And, then, proud flesh says, "Ah, you have labored more abundantly than they all." No, no, my Brethren. When we come to look upon all our works, those of us who have toiled the most for Christ—I am sure we cannot find any satisfaction in them. In reviewing all that I have attempted to do, I can only say, so far as my own personal experience goes, I am as heartily sick of my own righteousness as I am of my sins. I feel as much reason to have God's grace over the best deeds as over the worst. I often lie down in the very dust of self-abasement feeling that I have not anything—no, not a rag of my own—no, not a grain of merit, not an atom whereon I can trust. As abject a sinner as there is out of Hell—if I look into myself—it is my only satisfaction that I am enabled to look to Christ and to Christ alone. All that is of Nature's spinning must be unraveled. All that is of Nature's manufacture must be broken in pieces. We must unhoof the horses and burn the chariots of human strength in the fire, for thus says the Spirit, "I will stain the pride of all glory and bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth." "Yes, doubtless and we count all things His for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Here is our struggle—"that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the Law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith."

III. Thirdly, we draw from the text A SENTENCE OF ADMONITION TO THE BELIEVER—"Of His fullness have all we received."

Should not the believer be of all men the most honorable? I have heard sometimes of a man being a Christian and yet being proud. Now a proud Christian is a singular contradiction. Yet you do know some—you would not say they were not godly people—but then, their coat is made of the best broad cloth and they think it would be a little going down if they were to speak to those who wear fustian or white coats during the week. They are a little better off in the world and so they do not receive their poorer Brethren. This is the most silly pride in the world. I have not a word to say about it. It is too mean to be worth a man's words spent upon it.

But there is some pride which a Christian man will entertain and almost think it is humility. It is a pride about his experience—a pride of having grown wise at last. He thinks he has learned too much ever to be proud, which proves that he is puffed up beyond measure. He says, "Well, those young people are very self-conceited." He looks down on beginners and says, "Their greatest danger is to be lifted up with pride." While as for himself—good sober man, so old and experienced—it is not possible that he should be proud—yet proud all the while. To such we say, "What have you that you have not received?" I know people say it is more respectable to owe thirty thousand pounds than it is to break for three. But if I must be in debt, methinks I would rather be the smaller debtor.

Yet how many there are because they have received more from God than others—that is they are greater debtors than others—they are proud. You have more gifts than I have. Well, it only means you have got twice as much work to do as I have. So you have got more wealth than I. That means you are more in debt to God than I and are you proud of being in debt? Let the Christian be a humble-minded man. We talk of humility. What a lump of pride we are—fussy, stuck-up, wanting to have respect paid to us. If somebody comes between the wind and our nobility, we are upset. If somebody abuses us, what a state we are in. And oh, if anybody calls us ill-names, how harshly we consider ourselves treated.

If we thought less of ourselves we should not be quite so sensitive. Where should dust go but on the dunghill? And where should they put the man who knows himself to be vile but in the worst place? Yes, let them put us there—they will not give us worse than we deserve if we come to know ourselves in the sight of God. Yes, we may say of the slanderer, "Man, you have not hit it, you have not found out my fault. If you knew me better you could hit me harder." Yes, we might sometimes say to some cruel enemy, "You have made some mistake there, for I am innocent of that before God. But if you had read my heart and known how false I have been to my Lord and how unbelieving, you might have exposed me and hit me in a sore place and smitten me under the fifth rib."

I think we ought always to say, "Well, we do not deserve it for that, but we deserve it for something else, so we will take it patiently and be willing that men should wipe their shoes on us if it will but glorify Christ." Yes, let them call us devils if we may but help to do angel's work in redeeming men. Let them scout us, hiss at us and say, "Yah! there goes a hypocrite!" or anything else they like, if we may but magnify Christ while living and enjoy Him when we shall come to die. Be humble Christian, for what have you that you have not received?

Next, let us be grateful. All that we have we have received from Christ. Let us love Him. When our friends give us love we give them love in return. But what is that which we owe mother, father, husband, wife, or friend compared with what we owe to Christ? Let your hearts burn, let your love be inflamed. Fall at His dear feet—embrace them with affection. Spend and be spent for Him. Live unto Him and be ready to die for Him. For all you have you have received of His fullness. I think that what we want as a Church is more recognition of the gifts we have as coming from Christ. I do not think we have the gratitude we ought to have to Him. We do not make sacrifices for Him. We give, it is true, to this cause and to that, but are there half-a-dozen Christians here that have ever made a sacrifice for Christ?

He gives us blood and we give Him a few tears. He gives us sweat and we give Him cold services. He gives us groans and we give Him languishing hymns. He gives us life and death, body, soul and spirit and we give Him only what we can spare after we have first looked to ourselves—and not all that in most cases. Let us feel, O God, let us feel gratitude to Christ—a fire within our bones and a flame within our hearts and a sevenfold strength in our spirits—not only to believe in His name, but also to suffer for His sake. Let gratitude be the inspiration of our lives.

IV. I have not time nor strength to enlarge further upon these points. Therefore the last and not the least important. The text seems to me to be A MOST SWEET INVITATION—A MOST BLESSED ENCOURAGEMENT TO POOR NEEDY SINNERS.

So, Sinner, you need tonight a new heart. You will never be able to make your heart new yourself—He must give it to you. So, Sinner, you need repentance—you can never repent of yourself. He is exalted on high to give repentance. So you need a sense of your own sin and sinfulness— He can make you feel it, for He felt it all Himself. So you do feel your sin, you say and you want to have it pardoned—He can pardon it and without exception He has power to forgive sins on earth. Tell me not how vile you have been—He can pardon you. Say you are guilty of aggravated crimes— He can forgive you. Tell me not, even, that you have stained your hands with blood—He is able to wash out that stain and make you whiter than snow.

Sinner, Sinner, Sinner! Do you need tonight to have your aching heart filled with peace?—He can do it. Of His fullness have all the host in Heaven received. Of His fullness have all the saints on earth received. And you, poor weeping Sinner, you may, you shall receive, too. They had nothing to bring to Him any more than you have. They came to Him black in sin—as black as you and He washed them. They came to Him lost—lost as you can possibly be—He saved them and He can save you. He asks you to do nothing of yourself, but to trust Him and Him alone. He is God. Oh, trust the Omnipotent One. He is perfect Man. Oh, trust the Meritorious One. He died. Oh, trust His dying sacrifice.

He lives. Oh, trust His authoritative plea. Sinner, if we asked you to trust a man, we should think it right that you should object. If he pretended to be a priest and asked you to trust him, you might turn upon your heel with a sneer. But I bid you trust in no mere man but in Him that died upon the Cross. And He is worthy of your trust. Yonder millions redeemed from death and Hell will tell you, "Worthy is the Lamb!"—and thousands here below will tell you, too, "That He is worthy of all your confidence." May the Spirit of God graciously lead you out of self into Christ and enable you once for all to put your trust in Him.

I will tell you, tonight, an anecdote which I think I have repeated before, but not in this house. There was a poor man who had been a long while burdened in spirit—one night he had a dream. To dreams we attach no importance. But this dream happens to be an allegory. He dreamed that he stood at the gates of Heaven, longing to enter but he dared not and could not, for sin had shut him out. He was longing to come but he dared not. At length he saw approaching the pearly gates a company of men who came on singing. They were goodly to look upon, dressed in white robes.

So he stepped up to one of them and he said to them, "Who are you?" And they replied, "We are the goodly fellowship of the Prophets." He said, "Alas! I cannot enter with you." And he watched them until they had passed the gates and he heard from outside the voice of song as they were received with welcome. Cast down and troubled, he watched until he saw another company approach and they came with music and rejoicing. He said to them, "Who are you?" They were great hosts who had washed their robes and they replied, "We are the noble army of martyrs." He said, "I cannot go with you." And when he heard the shouts a second time ascending from within the gates, his heart was heavy within him at the thought that it was not possible for him to enter there.

Then came a third company and he detected in the main the Apostles and after them there came mighty preachers and confessors of the Word. He said in his heart, "Alas! I cannot go with you, for I am no preacher and I have done nothing for my Master." His heart was ready to break, for they entered and were lost to his sight. And he heard the triumphant acclamations as the Master said, "Well done, enter into the joy of your Lord." But as he waited, he saw a greater company approaching. He marked in the forefront Saul of Tarsus, Mary Magdalene, the thief that died upon the Cross. And they came streaming on.

So he said to one of them, "Who are you?" And they replied, "We are a company of sinners whom no man can number. We are saved by blood— through the rich, free, sovereign grace of God." Indeed, all the companies might have said the same and the dream would have been more complete. But as this poor man, with the tears in his eyes heard this word, he said, "Thank God, I can go with you, for I am a sinner like you and like you I trust in the merit of Him that died on Calvary." So he joined their ranks and was about to enter but he said in his heart, "When we come, there shall be no songs. They will admit us, but it will be in silence, for we bring no honor to God. We have done nothing for Him—there will be no voices of music when we come in."

But to his surprise the acclaim was louder, the music was more melodious and the shouts of acclamation were louder far, while they said, "Here are they who come to complete the number of the host whom Jesus bought with His blood."

Now, Sinner, let your ear be attentive and let your heart bow down to listen while I admonish you. What? Though you are a poor sinner—if you believe in Christ, you can come in as a poor sinner! Indeed, this is the way we all must come, for there are not, after all—though our imagination, like the dream, may suggest it—there are not two ways of entrance. We all come to Him empty—to be filled— naked, to be clothed—lost to be saved. Let me, then, just put the way of salvation plainly to you all.

"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." So said Christ. This was the commission which He gave to His Apostles. What is it to believe? To believe is to trust Christ. To put it as the Negro

said, "Massa, I fall flat down on de promise." That is to believe—to fall flat on the finished work and sure promise of Christ.

The Lord enable you to be rid of self and self-confidence and to trust Christ. Then let Hell roar, let earth rage, let the Law thunder, let the precept threaten, let condolence accuse. But oh, let the Son of God arise. Bound by His Word, He will display a strength proportioned to your day. He will never suffer you to perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand. Amen.

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

Chapter 68

John 1,16 #858 - The Fullness of Jesus the Treasur

THE FULLNESS OF JESUS

THE TREASURY OF SAINTS

NO. 858

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 28, 1869,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Of His fullness have we all received and Grace for Grace."

John 1:16.

THESE are not words spoken by John the Baptist, as a cursory reader might imagine, but they were written by John the Evangelist. The verse preceding is a paragraph cast into the midst of the Gospel, causing a temporary break. Omitting that verse, we read as follows: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth; and of His fullness have we all received and Grace for Grace."

In its more limited meaning, as it stands in its connection, the text appears to teach that while Jesus Christ dwelt on earth there was a Divine Glory about His Person and Character which His Apostles and disciples clearly beheld, perceiving in Him and in His teaching a fullness of Divine Grace and the Truth of God. And further, that this Grace and Truth were Divinely contagions, so that the disciples participated in it and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus and learned of Him— this being especially true of the Apostles who drank most fully into the life and power of Jesus and continued to reveal to the world, after their Master was taken up—the Grace and Truth of the Gospel committed to them.

But this passage is not to be restricted to so limited a sense—it is of far wider range and of much greater depth. We understand it of our Lord Jesus in the whole of His Character and work. Looking beyond His earthly life we see Him in His Crucifixion, His Resurrection, His Ascension, His sitting at the right hand of God and His Second Advent. And beholding Him as the all-sufficient Savior, we this day behold His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth! And we, that is, the whole range of the saints in all ages past and in all periods to come—we receive out of this fullness superabundant Grace!

I. In discussing this text I shall first remind you of the ONE GLORIOUS PERSON concerning whom this verse is written. There are other persons in the verse, but they are comparatively insignificant. "We all" are mentioned as the receivers—we occupy the most humble place. The one throne of the text, (and a glorious high throne it is), is reserved for Him who is intended in the pronoun, "His." "Of His fullness have we all received." We know that this is no other than that

august Person whom John calls, "The Word," or the speech of God, so called because God in Nature has revealed Himself, as it were, inarticulately and indistinctly— but in His Son He has revealed Himself as a man declares his inmost thoughts—by distinct and intelligible speech.

Jesus is to the Father what speech is to us. He is the unfolding of the Father's thoughts, the revelation of the Father's heart. He that has seen Christ has seen the Father. "Would you have me see you?" said Socrates, "then speak," for speech reveals the man. Would you see God? Listen to Christ, for He is God's Word, revealing the heart of Deity. Lest, however, we should imagine Jesus to be a mere utterance, a mere word spoken and forgotten, our Apostle is peculiarly careful that we should know that Jesus is a real and true Person, and therefore tells us that the Divine Word, out of whose fullness we have received, is most assuredly God!

No language can be more distinct. He ascribes to Him the eternity which belongs to God—"In the beginning was the Word." He clearly claims Divinity for Him—"The Word was God." He ascribes to Him the acts of God—"Without Him was not anything made that was made." He ascribes to Him self-existence which is the essential characteristic of God—"In Him was life." He claims for Him a Nature peculiar to God—"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." And the Word is "the true light, which lights every man that comes into the world." No writer could be more explicit in his utterances, and beyond all question he sets forth the proper Deity of that Blessed One of whom we all must receive if we would obtain eternal salvation.

Yet John does not fail to set forth that our Lord was also Man. He says, "the Word was made flesh"—not merely assumed manhood, but was made. And made not merely Man as to His nobler part, His Soul, but Man as to His flesh, His lower element. Our Lord was not a phantom, but One who, as John declares in his Epistle, was touched and handled. "The Word dwelt among us." He tabernacled with the sons of men—a carpenter's shed His lowly refuge and the caves and mountains of the earth His midnight resort in His later life. He dwelt among sinners and sufferers, among mourners and mortals, Himself completing His citizenship among us by becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.

See, then, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, where God has treasured up the fullness of His Grace! It is in a Person so august that Heaven and earth tremble at the majesty of His Presence and yet in a Person so humble that He is not ashamed to call us, "Brethren." The Apostle, lest we should by any means put a second person in comparison with the one and only Christ, throughout this chapter continually enters caveats and disclaimers against all others. He bars the angels and shuts out cherubim and seraphim by saying, "Without Him was not anything made that was made"! At the creation of the world no ministering spirit may intrude a finger. Angels may sing over what Jesus creates, but as the Builder of all things He stands alone.

Further on the Apostle guards the steps of the Throne against John and virtually against all the other witnesses of the Messiah, albeit among those that are born of women there was not a greater than John the Baptist, yet, "he was not that Light." The stars must hide their heads when the sun shines—John must decrease and Christ must increase. No, there was One whom all the Jews reverenced and whose name is coupled with that of the Lamb in the triumphant song of Heaven! They sang the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb. But even he is excluded from the glory of this text, "For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ." Moses must sit down at the foot of the Throne with the tablets of stone in his

hands, but Jesus sits on the Throne and stretches out the silver scepter to His people.

Lest there should remain a supposition that another person yet unmentioned should usurp a place, the Apostle adds, "No man at any time has seen the Father." The best and holiest have all, alike, been unable to look into that excellent Glory! But the Word has not only seen the Father, but has declared Him unto us! The text is as Tabor to us and while in its consideration, at the first we see Moses and Elijah and all the saints with the Lord Jesus, receiving of His fullness, yet all these vanish from our minds and our spirit sees "no man, but Jesus only." Gazing into this text, one feels as John did when the gates of Heaven were opened to him and he looked within them and he declared, "I looked and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion."

He saw other things afterwards, but the first thing that caught his eye and filled his mind was the Lamb in the midst of the Throne! Brothers, it becomes us as ministers to be constantly making much of Christ, to make Him, indeed, the first, the last and the midst of all our discourses! And it becomes all Believers, whenever they deal with matters of salvation, to set Jesus on high and to crown Him with many crowns. Give Him the best of your thoughts and works and affections, for He it is who fills all things and to whom all things should pay homage.

II. Secondly, there are TWO PRECIOUS DOCTRINES in the text. The first doctrine teaches us that in this glorious Person of Jesus all fullness is treasured up, and the second—without which the first might yield us little comfort—that all this treasure of Divine Grace is received by His saints, so that all His saints receive all they have that is gracious and truthful from Him.

1. First consider this master Truth of God, that all Divine Grace is treasured up in Christ Jesus. "His fullness," says the text. Ah, what a word, "His fullness!" If I had no other text given me to preach from until all preaching should be ended, this might suffice. His fullness! O Brothers and Sisters, here is a fullness which cannot be measured for length, or breadth, or depth—for He is filled with all the fullness of God! "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." The fullness of which the text speaks particularly is His double fullness of Grace and Truth. There is in Jesus Christ a fullness of essential Grace for it is His Nature to overflow with free mercy to the miserable sons of men.

It was a fullness of Grace in Him that made Him enter into the Eternal Covenant and undertake Suretyship engagements for us. It was a fullness of love and Grace which sustained Him in the discharge of His liabilities as our Great Substitute and the fullness of Grace it is which constrains Him, still, to persevere in His work, saying, "For Zion's sake I will not rest, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not hold My peace." In Christ there is a fullness of Grace to impart to us and to that the text refers a fullness of pardoning Grace, so that no sin can ever exceed His power to forgive!

It refers a fullness of justifying Grace, so that He justifies the ungodly. A fullness of converting Grace, so that He calls to Him whom He pleases. A fullness of quickening Grace, for "He quickens whom He wills." Here is a fullness of purifying Grace, for His blood cleanses us from all sin and a further fullness of comforting Grace, of sustaining Grace, of satisfying Grace, of restoring Grace—Jesus has a fullness in whatever office you regard Him—and with whatever needs. He is never limited in any gift or Grace, but always full thereof. This fullness, time would fail us to rehearse! Drink of it! Plunge into it, and you shall know far more than I can, by any possibility, tell.

This, however, I may say—the fullness which dwells in Christ is, from the text, clearly proved to be an abiding fullness, for, mark, "We all," says he, "have received of it." And yet he calls it a "fullness," still. It was a fullness before a single sinner came to it to receive pardon—before a solitary saint had learned to drink of that river the streams of which make glad the Church! And now, after thousands and even myriads of bloodredeemed saints have drank of this life-giving stream, it is just as overflowing as ever!

We are accustomed to say that if a child takes a cupful from the sea it is just as full as before, but that is not literally true—there must be just so much the less of water in the ocean. But it is literally true of Christ, that when we have not only taken out cups full—for our needs are too great to be satisfied with such small quantities—when we have taken out oceans full of Divine Grace—and we need as much as that to carry us to Heaven—there is actually as much left! Although we each have drawn upon the treasury of His love to an extent so boundless that we cannot understand it, yet there is as much mercy and Divine Grace left in Christ as there was before. And it is a "fullness," still, after all the saints have received of it.

Brethren, there is a fullness of Truth in our Lord as well as Grace, that is to say, everything which Christ says is not only true, but emphatically true. And not only true in one sense, but true in multiple senses—true to the letter and to the jots and to the tittles—true today and true tomorrow and true forever! True to one saint and true to every saint! True at one season and true in all seasons! There is a blessed emphasis of Divine reality in Christ Jesus. Every word He speaks is as the decree of God. Every doctrine that He promulgates is clear as the Great White Throne. In Him there is no admixture of error. "Never man spoke like this Man," because His teaching is unalloyed gold. All doctrine which He reveals is as pure and celestial as the dew from Heaven.

Brethren, there is an abiding fullness of truth in Christ! After you have heard it for 50 years, you see more of its fullness than you did at first. Other truths weary the ear. I will defy any man to hold together a large congregation, year after year, with any other subject but Christ Jesus! He might do it for a time. He might charm the ear with the discoveries of science, or with the beauties of poetry. And his oratory might be of so high an order that he might attract the multitudes who have itching ears, but they would, in time, turn away and say, "This is no longer to be endured. We know it all."

All music becomes wearisome but that of Heaven! But oh, if the minstrel does but strike this celestial harp, though he keeps his fingers always among its golden strings and is but poor and unskilled upon an instrument so Divine, yet the melody of Jesus' name and the sweet harmony of all His acts and attributes will hold His listeners by the ears and thrill their hearts as nothing beside can do! The theme of Jesus' love is inexhaustible! Though preachers may have dwelt upon it century after century, a freshness and fullness still remain.

2. The second doctrine is that all the saints have received all of Grace out of the fullness of Christ. It is not one saint who has derived Grace from the Redeemer, but all. "Of His fullness have we all received." And they have not merely derived a part of the blessings of Grace from Jesus, but all that they ever had they received from Him. It would be a wonderful vision if we could now behold passing before us the long procession of the chosen, the great and the small—the goodly fellowship of Apostles, the noble army of martyrs—the once weeping but now rejoicing band of penitents. There they go! I think I see them all in their white robes, bearing their palms of victory.

But you shall not, if you stop the procession at any point, be able to discover one who will claim to have obtained Grace from another source than Christ. Nor shall one of them say, "I owed the first Grace I gained to Christ, but I gained other Grace elsewhere." No, the unanimous testimony is, "of His fullness have we all received." My inner eye beholds the throng as the procession pauses before the Throne of God. Oh, can you see how every man prostrates himself before the Throne of the Lamb and altogether they cry, "Of His fullness have we all received"?

Whoever we may be. However well we may have served our Master. Whatever honor we have gained—though our Lord has helped us to finish our course and to win the prize—yet it is ALL of him—"Non nobis Domine!" Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the praise! What a precious Truth of God, then, we have before us, that all the saints in all ages have been just what you and I must be tonight if we would be saved—receivers! They did not, any one of them bring anything to Christ, but received from Him.

If they, at this moment, cast their crowns at His feet, their crowns were first given to them by Him! Their robes are wedding garments of His providing. The whole course of saintship is receptive. None of the saints talk of what they gave. None of them speak of what came of themselves, but they all bear testimony without a solitary exception that they were all receivers from Jesus' fullness! Oh, but this casts mire into the face of human self-sufficiency! What? Not one saint who had a little of his own? Not one of all the favored throng who could furnish himself? No, not one! Did none of them look to the works of the Law? No, they all went to Jesus and His Grace and none to Moses and the Law. Did none of them trust in priests of earthly anointing? Did none of them bow down before holy fathers and saintly confessors to obtain absolution? There is not a word said about such foolishness! Nor even a syllable concerning appeals to saints—but all the saved ones received direct, "from His fullness," who fills all in all. I must not leave this second doctrine, however, without noting that these receptive saints received very abundantly. They drew from an abundance, even a fullness—and they also drew largely, as indicated by the words, "and Grace for Grace," which words are only difficult to understand by reason of the extent of meaning hidden in them—for they might be translated a dozen ways with equal accuracy.

Do they not mean this?—Just as Samson slew so many Philistines that he cried out, "Heaps upon heaps," so our Lord has given to His people Divine Grace at such a rate that they have Grace upon Grace for abundance? They have received from Him such a plenty, such a plenitude of Divine Grace and the Truth of God that as the ancients fabled Mount Pelion to be piled upon Ossa by the giants to make a staircase to the skies, so our great Savior has piled mountains of Grace upon mountains of Grace—that on these, as on a stupendous ladder—His elect might climb to the Throne of God! Not one step to Heaven is other than of Divine Grace—and all comes out of His fullness.

III. We advance to the third point and mark THREE EXPERIENCES indicated by the text. And first, Beloved in the Lord, if you and I would receive of the fullness of Christ, it is imperatively necessary that we should have an experience of our own emptiness. All saints receive of Christ, but no vessel can receive beyond the measure of its emptiness. The more full it is, so much the less is its capacity for reception. And the more empty it is, so much the greater the space which can be filled. This is a hard lesson for human nature, for we firmly believe in ourselves.

You say, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." We learn this with our mother tongue and we repeat it so often that we believe it! And like the Pharisee, we make it our daily boast, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." The Pharisee would see no chaff in his wheat, whereas Divine Grace makes us to be like the publican who could see no wheat in his chaff and would only say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is hard going down the ladder of self-knowledge. We give up with great reluctance our flattering opinions of ourselves. We are hard to empty of the notion of our own inherent merit—and if the Lord spills that upon the ground—we then hold to the idea of our own inherent strength!

What if we have no merit, yet at least we will have some, by-and-by, and we spin out our poor resolves as freely as a spider spins her web and the fabric is as frail. And if our notion of power is taken from us, we then betake ourselves to our self-justification by endeavoring to persuade ourselves that we are not responsible! Or, wrapping ourselves in despair, we declare that we cannot help ourselves and wickedly cast our ruin upon destiny. Man is hard to be dragged away from the rock of self-justification. Like Theseus in the old mythology, he is glued so fast to the great stone of self-conceit which lies hard by the gates of Hell, that a stronger than Hercules is needed to tear him from it! And even such a deliverer must rend him from it, leaving his skin behind.

When the Lord comes and makes the sinner stand before His bar and plead, "Lord, I am guilty," the man is made ready to receive of Christ's merits because he is emptied of his own. Hear him again: "Lord, I would gladly repent and believe, but oh, for this I have no strength! Be You my Helper." The man's own power is gone and with it his hardness of heart. He confessed that he has willfully and wickedly sinned, and now the Lord pours out His Grace and mercy. Our Lord withholds from those who are full—but He is always ready to give to those who are empty! Never does He keep back anything from those who are consciously in need. Never does He give anything to those who say they need nothing.

There must be in each of us, then, an emptiness of self if we are to enjoy the fullness of Christ. But he who knows the emptiness of self is not, therefore, saved. The man who knows he has the fever is not cured by that knowledge. The man who knows he is condemned to die is not, for that reason, pardoned. It is a dreadful thing to stop short with a mere sense of sin—we must go on to the second experience—a personal reception of Christ Jesus. Here I shall put the question to each of my hearers, especially to professors of religion—Have you received out of Christ's fullness? I am not asking you whether you are Church members. We sorrowfully know that it is one thing to be that, and quite another thing to receive Christ.

I do not ask you whether you received the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Alas, to receive bread and wine is a very different thing from feeding upon the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ! The one is a carnal act which Judas might perform, who had a devil, but the other is a spiritual act, possible only for spiritual men. "Oh," says one, "do not put high standards before us." No, I am not. I am putting the lowest standard that can prove a soul to be saved—have you received Christ? I want to call your attention to the marvelous simplicity of this one act by which salvation comes to all the saints. It is receiving. Now, receiving is a very easy thing. There are 50 things which you and I cannot do, but, my dear Friend, you could undoubtedly receive a penny, could you not?

There is not a man, nor woman, nor child here, so imperfect in power as to be unable to receive. Everybody seems capable of receiving any amount. Mark, then, in salvation you do nothing but merely receive. There is a hand, a beggar's hand and if it is needed to write a fair letter, it cannot do that, but be assured it can receive! Try it, and the beggar will soon let you know. Look at that hand again. Do you see that it has the palsy? It quivers and shakes! Ah, but it can receive, for all that! Many a palsied hand has received a jewel. But do you not see that in addition to being filthy and palsied, it has a foul disease? The leprosy lies within and is not to be washed out by any mode of purification known to us, and yet it can receive!

The saints all came to be saints and remained saints through doing exactly what that poor dirty, leprous, quivering hand can do. All their Divine Grace came by receiving! So, dear Hearer, I am not setting up a high test, though I am assuredly setting up a very safe and necessary one. Have you received out of the fullness of Christ? Did you come all empty-handed and take Jesus Christ to be your All? I know what you did at first. You were for accumulating the shining heaps of your own merits and esteeming them as if they were so much gold—but you found out that your labor profited not, so at last you came empty-handed and said, "My precious Savior, do but give me Yourself and I will have done with merit. I renounce all merit and all doing and working and I take You to be everything to me."

Then, Friend, you are saved if that is true, for the acceptance of Christ is the mark of the saint. I said there were three experiences—the first was emptiness. The second is receiving. And the third is that blessed experience, the discovery that all we receive comes to us by Divine Grace. Look at the last words, "And Grace for Grace," which words may be read, "And Grace because of Grace," that is to say, the only reason why we get Grace is because of Grace! Grace is the cause of itself. It is a self-creating thing. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He is gracious because He is gracious and He gives Divine Grace to men NOT because they deserve it, or ask for it—but because He is gracious and chooses to bless them. I trust, beloved Brethren, you all have experienced this. If you know your own emptiness and Christ's fullness, I am sure you know, in a measure, the doctrine of Divine Grace and I hope you will go on to know it more and more. May you also get Grace to have more Grace—Grace to qualify you for a higher degree of Grace!

Now, you do not get some Grace from God's Grace and then the rest from your own efforts, but every step you have to go from the gate of the City of Destruction up to the pearl gates of the New Jerusalem, is all Grace. The road to Glory is paved with stones of Grace. The chariot in which we ride to Heaven is all of Grace. The strength that draws it and the axle that bears it up is all of Grace and Grace alone. In the whole Covenant of Grace, from the first letter of the charter down to its last word, there is nothing at all of merit or man's goodness, but it is Grace, Grace, Grace. As Grace laid the foundation, so Grace brings out every stone and as we sing—

"It lays in Heaven the topmost stone, And well deserves the praise."

I cannot make out where some of the Lord's children get their creed when they preach up the dignity and free will of man. There are good people but who seem to me to use part of the speech of Ashdod and only part of the speech of Jerusalem. To my mind, free will seems such an incongruity when tacked on to Divine Grace and makes a man's ministry like Nebuchadnezzar's image, with its head of gold and its feet of clay—the two things do not consort. O for a Gospel that is all of one piece—that reveals the sinner as saved by Grace from first to last—that God may

have all the praise!

IV. As briefly as possible we shall speak of FOUR DUTIES. 1. First, if we have received from Christ all we have, then let us praise

Him. If we live on His fullness, let us magnify and bless His name. Gratitude is a natural virtue and it ought always to be in us a spiritual Grace. O let our tongues talk well of Him to whom we owe everything! There was a poor man who was a pauper, but a kind friend had taken care of him and the old man was never better pleased than when he could ramble out his thanks to passing strangers. "That's a dear man who lives up at the white house, there, Sir.

"Do you see these clothes? He has given me all. I have not a rag on me but what is of his finding and I have a nice little cottage down there and, you know, he gave it to me—told me I might live there rent free! He lets me walk through his grounds and tells me I am welcome to all I can desire." It was the old man's joy to expatiate upon the extraordinary goodness of his benefactor. I wish we all imitated him. Do you see anything that is happy and peaceful in me? It all came from Jesus. I am a poor worm with nothing at all in myself that I could boast of, but if there is anything at all that could commend the Gospel, I received it all from my dear Lord and Master who has done more for me than tongue can tell!

Brethren, speak more of Him and sing more His praise! If you have the gift of song, never prostitute it (as I think it must be) to light, giddy, loose verses. Keep your sweetest notes for Him. Music, reserve your charms for him. If the things of this world might claim a note or two, yet, oh, let Him have the loudest of your harmony. You daughters of Israel, go forth to meet your David—for if any of this world has helped you—if Saul has slain his thousands—this David has slain His ten thousands! The mightiest of your foes He has overthrown. One of the best ways of praising Jesus is by trusting Him more. Faith is often compact praise. A trustful heart has in it the quintessence of music. Jesus loves to be trusted—it is a true, if indirect, form of gratitude, when we repose confidence because of mercies received.

Once more, if you wish to praise the Prince of Peace, as I trust you do, go and beg harder of Him. Go to Him this very night and say—

"The best return for one like me, So wretched and so poor, Is from Your gifts to draw a plea, And ask You still for more."

You cannot do your Lord a better turn nor make His heart more glad by way of praising Him, than by opening your mouth wider than ever tonight that you may receive more out of His fullness than you have ever had since you have known Him!

2. The second duty is this—if up till now we have received out of Christ's fullness, then let us repair to Him again. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. I find it my best and safest way and I recommend it to you all, to live daily on Christ, as I did when first I trusted in Him. If I have ever known Him at all. If He has ever been revealed to me and in me. If He has ever answered my prayers. If He has ever blessed me to your souls and made me the spiritual parent of any that are in the skies, I do know that I had it all from Him, for I never had a grain of anything good of my own—all my Grace has been the free grant of His sovereign will! But Satan says, "Ah, but you never knew Jesus!" Well, if I never did, I know what to do now. I will go to Jesus at once. If

I never did go to Him before, I will hasten to Him now. Now, when I go to Jesus Christ in that way, not as a saint but as a sinner—not as a preacher but as a poor, miserable offender—I find my comfort returns to me. I would like to be as a babe, always hanging on the breast of Jesus' love. I would like to be the fruit which remains on the bough and so grows ripe and sweet. I would like to be always locked up in Christ's pantry and never live on what I had before fed on, but feeding evermore! To this duty I invite you tonight. If you have received—come and receive again—you have not received the whole of Christ's fullness yet!

But all that is in Christ is meant to be received. Jesus Christ is like the sun—He is a storehouse of light, but the light is there to be shed abroad. He is like the clouds—a storehouse of waters, but all that is in Him is to descend in showers upon thirsty souls. There is nothing in Christ but what was meant to be distributed! He is like Joseph's granaries in Egypt, full of corn for hungry men. Do you read of mercy in Christ?—say, "That mercy was meant for a needy sinner. Even I will have it." Little children, when they come to the table, seem to know by instinct that everything there is meant to be eaten, so they cry, "Give me this. Give me that."

Now, in this be children. If you see anything in Christ, however rich and rare, however precious and choice, say, "Lord, give me that and give me that," for it is all meant to be given away—it is all provided on purpose to meet the needs of the Lord's people. So we leave that duty, but I trust not till we have attended to it.

3. The third duty is, if you have been receiving of Christ, try to obtain more, for the text says, "Grace for Grace"—that is, Grace upon Grace— Grace to fit you for higher Grace. If you are no richer than the old Believers under the Law and you have found only Jewish Grace, come and ask for clearer views. If you have Grace as a babe, ask Grace to be a young man. And if you have grown to be a young man, ask Grace to be a father. Aspire to the highest point of Christian perfection! In other matters we are very covetous, but in the things of God, what an accursed contentment we soon fall into!

I use the word advisedly, for it is accursed, since it brings the curse of barrenness upon us. I loathe to hear a Believer say, "Well, if I am but just saved, that is enough for me. If I may but just get in behind the door in Heaven, I shall be content." So you will, my dear Brother, but you ought not to talk that way! Your business is to show forth as much of Christ to His Glory as you possibly can. What? Are you so selfish that if you can creep into Heaven that will content you? I would Like to carry my Master a whole casket of jewels in my bosom! I would gladly say to Him, "Here am I and the children whom You have given me." I would desire to die with the sweet satisfaction, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, therefore there is laid up for me a crown of life that fades not away."

Wrestle for more Grace! If you are up to your ankles, wade into this river of gracious fullness up to your knees. If you are up to your knees, be thankful, but do not be content. I ask you to advance till you are up to your loins and be not fully satisfied even then. Forget the things that are behind, be not satisfied till you find a river to swim in! Strike out till you feel you are utterly out of your depth and then dive into it and strike out! Glory in Christ to think that it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell and be glad that you have learned to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

4. The last duty and the last word. If you have received of Christ, encourage others to receive of Him. Indeed, you need not go far for the encouragement, for you may first of all look at home. If Jesus Christ received you, whom will He not receive? If my Master's heart opened wide its doors to let me in, I know He has received one of the blackest that ever was accepted. And I feel confident in recommending you, poor, needy, troubled, conscience-stricken Sinner, to come to Jesus by simple trust tonight! I am sure if He had meant to reject you, He would not have accepted me. If you want to encourage souls to come to Christ, what a wonderful text this is: "Of His fullness have we all received."

I must bring that little dream of mine up to your mind's eye again. There are all the saints—millions of them—and they tell you, all of them, that they were all receivers. Now, suppose you were a beggar. You know what beggars do. If they go to a door and get anything, they make a little mark—you and I do not understand it, but it means, "Good house to knock at." And the next beggar who comes sees that token and he knocks boldly. If they get nothing, of course, they make some scurvy remark or another, after their own fashion, which the next beggar understands.

Now, I have already made that mark on Christ's door and I have told you of it! It is a good house to knock at, for I have tried it. But suppose, being a beggar, you were to meet some 50 or 60 tramps, all coming down the street and they were to say to you, "Are you in the same trade as we are?" "Yes, I am a beggar." "Well," they say, "there's a good house down there, we have all of us been to it and they have given us all something." "What? Given something to all of you?" "Yes, to every one of us." "What? To that man yonder? Why, he looks good for nothing!" "Ah, well, they gave him something." "What? To the whole of you?" "Yes." "Then I shall be as quick as I can to knock and get the next turn."

Why, of course, everybody would feel that that is the shop to beg at where nobody has been rejected. Now, since the world began there never has been a sinner who sincerely asked for mercy through faith in the precious blood of Jesus who has been rejected! Since Adam was cast out of the Garden, there has never been a sinner, whoever he might have been, that has cast himself by simple trust upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, whom God has cast out! Well, but if they all received and all received, "of His fullness," why not you?

One thing more—it may be that you will still say, "Perhaps the Lord will change His mode of dealing and reject me!" Oh, but let me tell you, He has pledged Himself that He will not, for, in addition to all those who have received at His hands, there is a promise given, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." He cannot cast you away, for He has said He will not and that word, "no wise," is like the flaming cherub's sword, which turns every way, not to keep you out of the garden of life, but to keep out all your doubts and fears.

Observe, "I will in no wise cast out." Then, if any man says, "But I am too old," that cannot be the reason for your rejection, for Christ has said, "Him that comes, I will in no wise cast out." "Oh, but I have sinned beyond all reason. I have gone to an excess of riot. Sir, I'm a damnable sinner. No one can say too bad of me." I do not care what you are! He cannot cast you out, for He has said, "in no wise," that is, on no account, on no consideration, under no circumstances! If you come to Christ, Heaven and earth may pass away and yon blue sky may be folded up and put away as a worn-out mantle, and the stars shall fall like withered leaves in autumn, and the sun be turned into darkness and the moon into blood—but NEVER shall a praying, trusting sinner be cast away from

the Presence of God!

O come, then, you most guilty, you most empty, you most worthless! Come and welcome! Hark! The silver trumpet sounds tonight, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" Come to the dear wounds of Jesus and be hidden there! Come to the fountain filled with blood and be cleansed there! Come to the heart of Christ in Heaven by trusting Him and be saved both now and forever!

May God bless you and everyone in this great house tonight! May He bless every one of you young women up there and of you men down there and you strangers thronging the aisles! May every one of us have to say, "Of His fullness have we all received and Grace for Grace." The Lord bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 1:1-18.

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Chapter 69

John 1,29 #1987 - Behold the Lamb of God

"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD"

NO. 1987

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1887,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,

Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

John 1:29.

JOHN the Baptist's one business was to bear witness to Christ. He was the morning star which heralds the rising sun. When the Sun appeared, he had no more reason for shining. You cannot account for John except by Jesus—the one reason for John's existence is Jesus. I wish it might be so with us. May we be able to say, "For me to live is Christ." May our life be such that it cannot be understood apart from Jesus—take Him away and our whole character would become an inexplicable mystery! I am afraid that some professors could be easily interpreted apart from Christ— perhaps could be better accounted for if there were no Christ. But if we are like John, true witnesses to Jesus, we shall find in Jesus the conscious purpose of our being and His Glory will be the clue to all the windings of our lives. For this purpose were we born and for this end have we come into the world, that we may bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ! Search and look, my Brothers and Sisters, whether it has been so with you.

When our Lord was thus set forth by John, it is well to note the special character under which He was declared. John knew much of the Lord Jesus and could have pictured Him in many lights and characters. He might especially have pointed Him out as the great moral example, the Founder of a higher form of life, the great Teacher of holiness and love. Yet this did not strike the Baptist as the head and front of our Lord's Character, but he proclaimed Him as One who had come into the world to be the great Sacrifice for sin. Lifting up his hand and pointing to Jesus, he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." He did not say, "Behold the great Exemplar"—no doubt he would have said that in due season. He did not even say, "Behold the King and Leader of a new dispensation"—that fact he, by no means, would have denied, but would have gloried in it. Still, the first point that he dwells upon, and that which wins his enthusiasm is, "Behold the Lamb of God." John the Baptist views Him as the Propitiation for sin and so he cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

My Brothers and Sisters, we may depend upon it that this must be a very practical Truth of God, for John was pre-eminently practical. What is the sum and substance of his teaching but, "Repent. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The axe is laid unto the root of the trees"? He has a

Volume 33 1word for everybody that comes—even the Roman soldiers are told to be content with their rations. John is no theorist or quibbler about dogma. He deals with life and character and demands works meet for repentance. Yet he makes a great point of our Lord's being the Sacrifice for sin. This, indeed, is the text of his life-sermon! Rest assured that there is something wonderfully practical about that Truth of God! And those who becloud it under the notion of being practical are laying aside the best instrument of doing good to men. For the reformation of manners and the overthrow of evil, and the setting up of the Kingdom of Righteousness throughout the world, there is no Truth of God like that which reveals Jesus as the Sacrifice provided by God for removing the sin of men!

The stern Baptist, the true Elijah who grappled hard with sin and laid the sword of repentance to its throat, saw that nothing could be done unless he pointed out the Lamb of God, by whom the world's sin is taken away. When repentance is the sermon, Jesus must be the text and the substance of the discourse! He puts life, power, energy into what otherwise would be a dead moral essay. O you who would save men from sin, take care that you preach the great Sacrifice for sin! It is clear that this doctrine has to do with repentance, for the Apostle of repentance introduced it—he whose first word was, "Repent," brought forward Jesus as the great Sin-Bearer, for he saw what I wish all would see, that there is a very intimate connection between the creation, growth and purity of repentance and the sin-bearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers, the fact is, the more we have to do with penitent sinners, the more we feel the need of a sin-bearer. O you that have never sinned and are wrapped up in your own self-righteousness, you imagine that you can enter Heaven by your own works! The bearing of sin by the Lamb of God does not seem to you at all necessary, but if you once dwelt, as John did, in the midst of a burdened people who came lamenting and confessing their sins, you would feel that nothing could bring them into reconciliation with God but faith in the appointed Atonement. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," is the text which evangelists love because without it they cannot face the troubled ones who throng around them!

My Brothers, in proportion as you wisely love your fellow men you will prize the Sacrifice for sin. Your practical dealing with a perishing people will make you prize the Savior. Oh, what would I do if I were sent to preach to this vast throng and had no sin-offering to declare to you! Might I not break my heart before a task so useless, so cruel, as to have to denounce sin and yet to have no pardon to declare and, consequently, no hope? Now that I can tell of One who bore in His own body on the tree the transgression, iniquity and sin of men, I find my task a solemn one, but certainly not hopeless, nor even dreary! Happy, indeed, am I to be permitted to set forth so blessed a salvation! Blessed are the lips which are allowed to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." You see, then, that the practical character of John's mission made him all the more at home in setting forth the sacrificial Character of our Lord. If John the Baptist had not felt that the Character of our Lord, as a SinOffering, was the chief matter, he might have fitly pointed Him out as an example at the time when he delivered the words of our text. The Savior had not yet revealed to anyone the fact and meaning of His future death. His Passion was as yet a thing in the dim future, while His life was just blossoming out into public observation. He had newly left the holy quiet of the parental roof at Nazareth and the charm of early holiness was on Him. Should not the world now mark Him, that His example might be known throughout its entire length? In His retirement, His conduct had been such that the austere and devout Baptist

had noticed it—and had felt bound to acknowledge that his younger relative was a worthier Person than himself, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You." But John does not seem, when he beholds the Lord after His baptism, to think of His godly life already commenced, nor of that holy life which he could foresee in Him. Rather he fastens his eyes upon the sacrificial Character of that wondrous Personage and dwells on that, alone, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." Brothers, that age needed an example as badly as ours does, but it needed a Savior still more—and John sees first that which is first!

Let me add that the time was doubly opportune for dwelling upon our Lord's example, since He had just returned from His famous temptation in the wilderness, wherein He had rehearsed His life-struggles. You cannot, in reading the narrative, piece in the 40 days' temptation in the wilderness anywhere else but just here. We read that our Savior, after His Baptism, was led up immediately into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Tempted He was, but He yielded in no point. In the threefold battle He vanquished the power of darkness at every point, and now, armed for the fray, in mail which He had tried and proven, the Champion stood before John! And it would not have been singular had the man of God cried out, "Behold the Perfect One, in whom the prince of this world has no place. Copy His supreme example!" But no, the great Baptist's eyes rest not on that—the blood and wounds of the Passion are before his mind's eye and beyond all else he sees the sacrificial Character of the wondrous Being who now stands in the midst of the throng. The fact that He is the appointed Victim for human sin enwraps the whole soul of the preacher and he cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Brothers and Sisters, I desire to be in the same case with John the Baptist. I would have my thoughts of Christ concentrated upon His atoning death henceforth and evermore! During the little time in which I may be spared to lift up my voice in this wilderness, I would bear witness to the Lamb of God! The years may be short in which I may guide this flock, but around the Cross shall be to me, forevermore, the place of green pastures—and from the Sacrifice of our Lord shall flow the still waters. Many others are dealing with other aspects of our Lord's work. Some, I doubt not, faithfully, and others with evil intent. I may very well leave them to do their best or their worst, for at least one may be allowed to be baptized for the Crucified, separated unto the Cross, dedicated to the Atonement by blood. I know no Atonement but Substitution, no Substitute but Christ. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." To the declaration of that fact I set myself apart to life's end. I. To come still closer to our text, I would have you notice, in the first place, that JOHN SET FORTH CHRIST AS A SACRIFICE WITH EVIDENT PERSONAL PERCEPTION OF THE FACT. When a man says, "Behold!" he sees something himself. He sees that something with clearness and he desires you to see it and, therefore, he cries, "Behold! Behold!" John had, from his birth, been ordained to be the herald of the Christ. But he evidently did not know who the Lamb of God might be. As a babe, he leaped in the womb when he came near to the mother of our Lord. But yet he did not know Jesus as the Lamb of God. He says, "I knew Him not."

Some suppose that John and Jesus had never met during their early years, but I find it hard to believe. I see quite another meaning here. John knew Jesus, but did not know Him as the Sin-Bearer. I think he must have known the life of the Holy Child, his near relative, while He grew in favor both with God and man, but he had not yet seen upon Him the attesting seal which marked Him as the Son of God. John admired the Lord's Character very much, insomuch that when He came to be baptized by him, John said, "I have need to be baptized by You." Yet John

says, "I knew Him not." He knew Him as one of high and holy character, but as yet he saw not the token which the Lord God had secretly given to his servant—for he saw not the Spirit of God descending and resting upon Him. John shrewdly suspected that Jesus was the Son of the Highest, of whom he was the forerunner, but a witness must not follow his own surmises, however correct they may be! John, as the Lord's servant, did not dare to know anything of his own unguided judgement—he waited for the secret sign. Certain preachers tell their people anything they invent out of their wonderful brains, but the true servant of God has no business to put forth his own thoughts or opinions—he must wait for a word from God. The message should come straight from the Master—"Thus says the Lord." John, though he saw about this wondrous Jesus such marvelous traits of Character that he was sure He was much greater than himself, yet says, "I knew Him not." He would know nothing but as it was revealed to him by the Lord God who sent him.

But when, at last, he received that personal token when he plunged our blessed Master into the waters of the Jordan—and saw the heavens opened and the Dove descend—and heard the Voice saying, "This is My beloved Son," then he knew Him and was, therefore, sure. When he afterwards spoke, he did not say, "I think this is the Lamb of God," or, "I am under the impression that this is the Son of God." No, he boldly cried, "Behold Him! See for yourselves. This is the Lamb of God! I speak with the accent of conviction! Nothing can shake me. The Master has given the sign and, therefore, I bear confident witness. Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

From then on, to John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ was more than He appeared to be to any others. To those who looked at the Savior, He would have seemed to be a plain, humble Jew, with nothing particular to mark Him out, except it were the gentleness of His demeanor and a certain heavenliness of carriage. But to the Baptist, He was now before all and above all! When a person was to be baptized, he confessed his sins to John. But when Jesus came with no sins of His own to confess, did He whisper in John's ear, "I bear the sin of the world"? I think He did, but in any case, this was true to the Baptist's mind—and to him, Jesus was the matchless Sacrifice, the one Atonement for human sin.

This was an extraordinary Truth of God to John. It took a miracle of Grace to make a Jew see, "The Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world." The Jew thought that the Sacrifice of God must be only for His chosen people—but John saw beyond all bounds of nationality and restrictions of race—and clearly perceived in Jesus "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Remember that John was of a priestly race—he was familiar with lambs for sacrifice. But as a priest, he never saw a lamb for sacrifice in a place far off from the consecrated shrine. There was only one altar and that was at Jerusalem—and there the lamb of sacrifice must be—not by Jordan's lonely stream. Yet John saw, in a place never dedicated in any peculiar manner to the service of God, the one great Sacrifice standing in the midst of the people. "Behold," he says, "this is the Lamb of God." See how well the Lord had taught him and how fully he had broken away from natural prejudices!

Beloved, I pray that each one of us may know, for himself, Jesus as the Sacrifice for sin. You were brought up as children to believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God, but all Revelation in the Book must again be revealed to the heart, or it will not be really known and perceived. For the life of the Truth of God to enter into our life it must become a matter, not of headcreed only, but of

heart-belief. That Jesus is the Substitutionary Sacrifice, the Propitiation for our sins, the Expiation for our iniquity, must be taught us by the Holy Spirit. I can truly declare among you that I do not preach this doctrine of vicarious Sacrifice as one among many theories, but as the saving fact of my experience! I must preach this or nothing! I know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, because I have neither hope nor comfort outside of the great atoning Sacrifice. He was made sin for us, even He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. "He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

Pray that each one of God's people may have a clear knowledge of Christ as the sin-bearing Lamb and have it written on his individual consciousness, for then nothing will shake him out of it. When men find their own deliverance from sin and their own peace with God flowing out of the atoning Sacrifice, this great Truth of God becomes a part of their inward experience and it can never be torn from them. O my Brothers and Sisters, when the great Sacrifice has saved you, you will never be able to doubt it! You will sooner doubt your own existence than doubt this blessed fact, that He bore our sin in His own body on the tree, and that through Him we are reconciled unto God! It was a matter with John of personal perception.

II. Let us advance a little. JOHN SET FORTH OUR LORD AS EMPHATICALLY THE SACRIFICE—"Behold the Lamb of God." This is more than John would have said of all the lambs that he had ever heard or read of since the first appointment of sacrifice. He remembered the firstling of the flock which Abel offered and the sacrifice of a sweet savor which Noah presented. He knew the sacrifices of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was familiar with the lamb of the Paschal Supper and those of Israel's high festivals. He remembered the thousands of offerings that had been presented by David and by Solomon, and by other kings in the great national acts of worship. But passing them all by as if they were all mere shadows, he points his finger to the Man, Christ Jesus, and he says of Him, "This is THE Lamb of God."

In this I think the Baptist comprehended everything that went before. There was the daily lamb of which I read to you in the commencement of the service, from Exodus 29:1-46. There had been slain before the Lord a lamb every morning, and a lamb every evening, all the year round throughout the centuries of Israel's history. Always and ever the continual sacrifice of the lamb was the symbol of Jehovah's dwelling with His people. But John puts his finger down upon a single Sacrifice and says, "This is the Lamb." All the other daily lambs had been but prefigurations of this! "Behold the Lamb."

Let me also call your attention to another wonderful lamb, the Paschal lamb, slain on the night when Israel went up out of Egypt, when each Hebrew smeared the lintel and side-posts of his door with blood—and the sight of that blood sufficed for the deliverance of the family, according to the Word of Jehovah, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." These Passover lambs were many and sacred to every Jewish mind! But John passes them all over and says, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Do you not think he also had in his mind the lamb spoken of by Isaiah, the great evangelical Prophet? Had he not in his memory that famous passage, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter"? John the Baptist cries, "This is He of whom the Prophet spoke, Behold the Lamb of God."

Yes, and if John's eyes had been turned to the future as well as to the past, so that he could have looked down the centuries and shared the visions of the Seer of Patmos, he would have seen the Lamb in the midst of the Throne, and have heard the song unto Him that was slain! But after seeing all the visions of the coming Glory of the Lamb, he would still have kept his finger pointed towards the blessed Christ of God, standing among the people, and would have said, "Behold the Lamb." All that you read of sacrifice and sin-bearing in the Old or the New Testament. All that you have ever heard, or ever shall hear, of the putting away of sin, if it is true, is all centered in this line, "Behold the Lamb." It is a great thing when we can focus our testimony upon a single point! Let every servant of God do so and bear his witness that there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved! There is no other purgation for sin in the whole universe save that great Sacrifice which takes away the sin of the world!

III. We will go a step further again—JOHN, IN DESCRIBING OUR LORD JESUS IN HIS SACRIFICIAL CHARACTER, WAS VERY EXPLICIT IN DECLARING HIM TO BE THE SACRIFICE OF GOD. He says: "Behold the Lamb of God." These words contain a great depth of meaning. "The Lamb of God." Did not the Baptist thus recall the day when Abraham walked with Isaac towards the mount that God had told him of? "And Isaac said to his father, My Father, behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham answered, My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb for the burnt offering." John, standing centuries after, seems to say, "Now is the saying of the Father of the faithful fulfilled! Behold how God provides! Behold the Lamb of God."

Under the old Jewish dispensation, if a man sinned, he said to himself, "I must go and find a lamb." And he went out to his own flock, or else to his neighbor's and he bought a lamb. That was his lamb which he brought for his own trespass. But you and I have not to go and find a lamb—God has already provided a Lamb—and we have only to accept the Lamb of God. And is it not a wonderful thing, that He, Himself, against whom all sin was leveled, provided the Sacrifice for sin? Behold the sin of man and the Lamb of God. Jesus is the Father's best Beloved, His choice One, His only One and yet He delivered Him up for us all—and God's Son became God's Lamb! O my Father, my Father, do I sin and do You find the Sacrifice? But if a Sacrifice must be found by the Father, why was it found so near His heart? He could find the Sacrifice for sin nowhere but in His own bosom. He had but one Son, His Only-Begotten—and "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." Jehovah gave His only Son to be a Sacrifice! Let Heaven and earth be filled with astonishment!

Beloved, if you think of it, who else could have provided a Sacrifice for the sin of the world? None will pretend to such ability. And when God, Himself, provided a Sacrifice, what other could He have found but His coequal Son? Who else could render the honor which was due to the broken Law? Who else could offer to Divine Justice the vindication which it demanded? Justice must be violated, or else man must perish forever—there remained no way of escape from this dilemma until the Son of the Highest condescended to become a Sacrifice and put away sin by His own death. So, you see, the Lord must, Himself, provide the Sacrifice—and that Sacrifice must be His only-begotten Son.

I do not think I can preach more, for a faintness has come over me, nor is there need for more if you will but chew the cud of this one precious Truth of God— Jesus is the Lamb which God

provided and He is the Lamb which God Himself presented at the altar. Yet I must rouse myself to say a little more. Who was it that sacrificed the Lamb of God? Who was the priest on that dread day? Who was it that bruised Him? Who put Him to grief? Who caused Him the direst pang of all when He cried, "Why have You forsaken Me?"

Was it not the Father, Himself? This was one point in the hardness of Abraham's test—"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a sacrifice." He must, himself, officiate at the sacrifice! This, the great Father did! He is the Lamb, the Lamb of God. And now, today, the bright side of this Truth remains. He is the Lamb that God always accepts, must accept, glories to accept! Bring you but Jesus with you and you have brought God an acceptable Sacrifice! You cannot fail to be forgiven when you come pleading the name of Jesus. If you should bring the fattest of your flock and the choicest of your herd, you might hear God say, "I will not accept your sacrifice"! But when you bring God's own Sacrifice, He cannot reject you! You are accepted in the Beloved! There is such acceptance of Christ with God that it overlaps your unacceptableness. It covers your sin. It covers you—it makes you to be dear to the heart of God!

Thus far have we come with this blessed text, even unto "waters to swim in." "Behold the Lamb of God."

IV. Lend me your ears a little longer while, in the fourth place, I show you that JOHN SET FORTH THIS BLESSED SAVIOR AS BEARING AND BEARING AWAY OUR SIN. You that have the Revised Version will please notice that the Revisers follow the Authorized Version in the body of the translation and say, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," but they have done wisely by putting in the margin, "bears the sin." Both meanings are here. In order to the bearing away of sin, there must first be the bearing of it. The Lord Jesus both took sin and took it away.

Dwell for a minute on the first fact, that sin was actually laid on Christ. I saw the other day, among the abominations of the Stygian Bog, across which I have been compelled to gaze of late, such a foul teaching as this— that the transference of sin is immoral. Yet is not Scripture full of it? "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Sin was borne by Christ—yes, actually borne by Him. "He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." They may make what they like of it. I am not going to explain or apologize, but I say without hesitation that the sin of the world was laid upon Christ—and He bore it—and bore it away! The heaviest thing in the universe is sin! The earth has been known to open beneath the unbearable load of it. Neither angels nor men can stand under the load of sin—it sinks them lower than the lowest Hell! When sin was laid upon the Lamb of God, He bore it—but He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and He was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. To have borne up the weight of the world would have been nothing compared with bearing the sin of the world.

The best of all is, however, that our Lord did not only bear the load, but He took it away. "He takes away the sin of the world." The sin which was laid upon Christ did not remain there! He took it away—it remains no more. We read in Scripture many things about sin, as that God forgives it, blots it out, forgets it, casts it into the sea, puts it behind His back and a great many other expressive figures—but this is, in some respects, the best of them—He takes it away! Blessed be His name! My Hearer, if you believe in Jesus, you need not ask, "Where is my sin?" Jesus took it away! By bearing it, He bore it away. It is gone, gone forever—it is utterly abolished. "The day

comes when the sins of Jacob shall be sought for, and they shall not be found; yes they shall not be, says the Lord." Our glory is that by the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, sin was made an end of. He finished transgressions, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness! This is a Gospel worth believing, worth living for, worth dying for! Let all teaching be accursed that comes in opposition to it! This is Heaven to a soul whose sins are dragging it down to Hell—sin can be forgiven, for Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." What a sight is this to see! Those eyes can never again be sore that have once seen sin put away by Jesus! V. I must, however, call your attention to another point which is that JOHN REPRESENTS OUR LORD AS REMOVING SIN CONTINUALLY. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Behold the sin of the world as one huge mass and Jesus deals with it as a whole and takes it away. John does not speak in the past tense nor in the future, but He speaks in the present—"He takes away the sin of the world." Our Savior's atoning Sacrifice, though it was but once offered, is perpetual in its effect. He must die at a certain point of time and there were reasons why His death should have taken place at the particular moment when it did. Yet time does not enter into the essence of it. The Sacrifice might have been offered a million years ago and, as the Lamb of God, He would still take away sin. Or the actual Sacrifice might further have been postponed, if Infinite Wisdom had so chosen, and yet the Lamb of God would now have taken away sin.

The date of His death is not the question—His Sacrifice is effectual before and after the event. Our Savior was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, in the purpose, Covenant and thought of God. His Sacrifice saved Adam, Noah, Moses, David and all the elect before the name of Calvary had become illustrious. Before He died, He stood before John the Baptist as taking away the sin of the world! And now, today, though His death is a matter of 1800 years ago, He still "takes away the sin of the world." In His Person He was always the Sin-Bearer and through His death He puts sin away forever. By one Sacrifice He has forever put away sin! His eternal merits forever remain a sweet savor unto the Lord God and forever remove the foul offense of human transgression. As the Great Purifier, He continually takes away and will continue to take away the sin of the world!

Blessed be God, I have, today, a Savior as fresh and full of power as if He had been crucified this very morning for my sin! He is now as able to save me as if He were at this hour on the Cross! Those dear wounds of His, in effect, perpetually bleed—in His case, the print of the nails is the token of an inexhaustible fountain of merit which is always flowing forth for the removal of my guilt, eternally efficacious, ceaselessly sin-cleansing. This is where we rest! It is the most grand fact in the history of all ages that Jesus takes away the sin of the world. We do not know what happened before this solar system was created and we do not need to know. We cannot prophesy what is going to happen when yon sun and moon and stars shall disappear like transient sparks from the anvil of power. But there never will be any new fact which can equal this first of the Truths of God—that the Son of God assumed human nature and, in that Nature, bore sin and bore it away. This is the Truth to be looked at beyond all others—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Although I am too weak to preach to you as I desire, I feel great joy for myself in looking to the Sin-Bearer who has taken away my sin. How I wish that all of you felt the same! This is the pith and the marrow of my theology. But you must take the Lamb of God for yourselves—you must

know Him for yourselves—you must believe in Him for yourselves and He will surely take away that sin which now burdens you. He will take it right away, so that it shall never burden you again. He will blot it out—it shall cease to be! You shall be no more under condemnation, but shall be free from it forever! God help you to know Jesus, of whom I speak to you!

VI. The last point is this—JOHN WITNESSED TO THE ALLSUFFICIENCY OF THE DIVINE SACRIFICE—"Who takes away the sin of the world." No other in all the world can take away sin but the Lamb of God. There is no sin which He cannot take away. There is no limit to the value of His great Sacrifice—He takes away the sin of the world. There is no other sin-bearer, no other atonement, no other satisfaction. No "purgatory" in the present nor in the future can take away sin! No supposed remedial pains in Hell are possible—neither lapse of years, nor bitterness of regret can take away sin! Jesus takes away the sin of the world and beside Him there is no other!

Mark you, "He takes away the sin of the world"—all manner of sin that was ever done in the world, by all sorts of men, of all races, in all places! He removes sins of long duration, of aggravated criminality, of crying heinousness—any sin that can be compassed within the bounds of the world—Christ takes away! O repenting sinner, though your sins should be as many as the hairs of your head and each one as black as the midnight of Tophet, yet Christ takes away each sin! Though you should have cursed God and slain your fellow men, yet such sin as this comes within the range of "the sin of the world." Even as another text puts it, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," so is this text to be understood! Jesus so takes away the sin of the world that whoever believes in Him shall no longer be guilty of sin, but shall be forgiven and be justified before God!

Do you hear this? There is nothing in this text to shut any man out of mercy! Behold, I set before you an open door. There is everything in my text to induce every one of you who is conscious of guilt to come to the Lord Jesus and accept Him as your Substitute and Sacrifice. Christ shall take away no man's sin that does not believe in Him. Christ has so taken away sin that whoever believes in Him shall live. If you will come, now, and lay your hand on this Divine Sacrifice, you shall find it All-Sufficient, whatever the nature of your guilt may be. O delightful Gospel! How sweet to preach it!

I have done when I have said this. John the Baptist appears to me to have relieved his mind by the utterance of my text. He was full of weariness because of the scribes and Pharisees, doctors and doubters who had been warring around him. He had been put on the defensive and had been harried with innumerable questions. First one and then another—this question and that question. And now John ends the wordy duel by pointing to One whose Presence was joy to his heart! There stands the Savior and John stops his argument and cries, "There He is! Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

It is to me a supreme joy to turn aside from those who becloud the everlasting Gospel—to leap out of the midst of controversy and to cry to you with exultation—Jesus is the Son of God! He is the Sacrifice for sin! He takes it away! Believe on Him and live! There is more joy in one sermon than in years of disputation. Oh, that everyone in this congregation might believe in Jesus and live! What a refreshment it is to the preacher's mind to get to his message at last, to get away from the bamboozlement of those who confound plain Truth, and to come to matter-of-fact dealing with eternal salvation. There, let them question and quibble—the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,

cleanses us from all sin!

With what certainty the Baptist speaks! He does not, for a moment, hesitate, or speak with cautious reserve. No debate disturbs the foundation of his confidence. Before his eyes he evidently sees the Sin-Bearer and he bids others see Him as he sees Him. To him no doubt remains, for he had seen the heavens opened above the head of Jesus—and he had heard the voice of God, Himself, saying, "This is My beloved Son." Dear Friends, the marks which prove our Lord Jesus to be the vicarious Sacrifice for sin are as clear to me as ever they were to John the Baptist! I dogmatize because I feel more than sure as to my Lord's being the great Sacrifice for sin! I could not doubt this doctrine if I were to try to do so. My hope, my joy, my very being hinge on my Lord's Substitution. This truth is woven into the warp and woof of my being. Jesus suffered in my place!

A leader in the religious world tells us that we have not yet obtained a satisfactory theory of the Atonement. Let him speak for himself! Thousands of us know what we believe and know what Jesus did for us! Where has the man lived? What comfort in life and death is there for one who cannot see clearly this first of Truths? I thank God I have a definition of the Atonement which is to me most clear, sure and full of comfort! Here it is—"He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." I can live by that and I can die by that. I am sick to death of the ever-repeated cant about, "theory of the Atonement." I have no theory, for I believe in the Atonement, itself! God keep us steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints and our consolation will abound.

And yet, once more, there seems to be a deep anxiety on John's part in the words of my text. He says, "Behold the Lamb of God." And he does so for the sake of those around him. We do not desire others to believe with us because we need them to keep us in countenance. John was not a man cut out of brown paper, in the same shape as thousands of others—he was an original, self-contained individual. He knew how to see the Lamb of God for himself, whether other people did or did not see Him. When I preach to you the doctrine of the vicarious Sacrifice, it is not because I am unable to believe this Truth, alone. Long ago I ceased to count heads. Truth is usually in the minority in this evil world. I have faith in the Lord Jesus for myself, a faith burned into me as with a hot iron. I thank God what I believe I shall believe, even if I believe it alone! If I am the last man to glory in the Substitution of the Lord Jesus, I shall count myself honored to bear His Cross alone.

But there is great love to his fellows in the heart of every man who has seen the Lord Jesus Christ as bearing sin. That great deed of love makes the beholder feel that he would have all men look and live. Were you ever half-starved and did you find bread? Then I know you pitied your famishing brother. Our very instincts lead us to spread the blessing which we have received. Even dogs would do that. A poor dog had his broken leg healed at the hospital and not many weeks after, he brought another lame dog to the same house of mercy. We also long to see men come to Christ because we have had our broken hearts healed by His tender hands. We love because He first loved us! Brothers and Sisters, I was ready to perish under a sense of sin! I was all but damned! I felt the wrath of God surging in my soul like a sea of fire! I found no relief or comfort. Even the Word of God did not cheer me. They told me of believing in Jesus, but till I learned that this Jesus was God's great appointed Sacrifice for sin, I saw nothing in Him to cheer me. When I learned that He had borne the penalty and satisfied Justice, then I found out the glorious secret

and my conscience was at rest! Conscience within us reflects, as in a mirror, the facts of the case as God sees them.

God causes an awakened conscience to require that which His justice requires. The demand of the conscience is the echo of the demand of the Divine Government. Conscience requires Atonement because the necessity of the case and the nature of God require it. When I learned that there was such an Atonement provided, oh, then I rested most sweetly! I wish you all did! You that have no atoning sacrifice to plead, how can you bear the weight of your sins? What will you do with them when the death-damp is on your brows? You for whom, according to your own creed, no debt was paid, no penalty endured—how will you answer Justice in her great and terrible day? Believers look to Jesus as discharging all their debt and they are not afraid of the day of account! But where will you look? Oh, what will you do?

Do not remain without faith in Him who stood in the sinner's place! His work is exactly what your mind needs, to give it peace. The satisfaction of Jesus will give your mind satisfaction, but nothing else will. Conscience, like the horse-leech, cries, "Give, give," and it will never cease its cravings till it meets with Christ, whose one full satisfaction will content it forever. "Behold the Lamb of God." I shall meet you all in the Day of Judgment and I tremble not to do so, for I have told you all the Truth of God so far as I know it. If you reject the Sacrifice for sin, I cannot help it! But, I beseech you, receive it and find that the Lamb of God has taken away your sin! Go in peace. The Lord go with you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Exodus 29:38-46; Isaiah 53:1-12; John 1:19-51.

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John 1,29 #2646 - The Baptist's Message

THE BAPTIST'S MESSAGE

NO. 2646

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 29, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1882.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said,

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:29.

JOHN was the herald of Christ. He came to bear witness to Him and to

prepare the way for Him. In olden times when kings traveled, they were accustomed to send heralds before them to announce their coming, and to prepare the way for them. And I have read that on several occasions the herald wore such gorgeous apparel—adorned with gold and lace—that when he went into some of the towns and villages, the people thought that he must be the king, himself! So they made ready to receive him with royal honors. When he said, "No, I am not the king, I have merely come to sound the trumpet and to say that he is coming," they wondered what the king, himself, must be like if his herald was so resplendent—and it is said that in several instances they refused to receive the king when he came, for they said, "The man who told us that he was only your servant was a far finer looking man than you are, and much more grandly dressed." So, when the king arrived and they saw that he was but plainly dressed, as kings usually are when not wearing their state robes, they would not receive him.

Something like that happens with some of Christ's heralds, but it did not occur in the case of John the Baptist. He was not arrayed in soft raiment or rich apparel. He came straight up from the wilderness clothed in a garment of camel's hair and with leather trousers about his loins— and his food was locusts and wild honey. Nor was there anything at all about John's mode of speech which was likely to attract attention to himself and make men think less of his Master when He should come. I wish that all of us, when we go forth as Christ's heralds, crying, "Behold the Lamb of God"—and that is our main business here below—would take care that we were never so grand in our style of thought or language that when the Master, Himself, comes in all His wondrous simplicity, men would begin to despise Him because they remembered the fine tones of His pretended herald! No, let us be simple and plain whenever we have to speak of Christ and when

our King, Himself, comes, let us step back and get out of sight, that He, alone, may be seen, and that all the people's hearts may be won to Him.

I have plunged into the middle of my subject at the very beginning of my sermon, for that is the theme on which I want to speak to you. First, I

Volume 45 1am going to describe the true messenger, John the Baptist, or anyone else who is like he. Then, secondly, I hope to talk about the true message—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." And then, thirdly, I must say a little upon the true reception of this message, telling what they do who really hear and believe the true messenger of God.

I. First, then, let us think of THE TRUE MESSENGER and, as I know that there are many here who try to do good by speaking for the Lord to their fellow men, let this first part of my subject be a lesson in selfexamination—not by way of discouragement, but rather of encouragement, I hope, to those whom I am addressing. Who are they who will be acknowledged by Christ, at the Last Great Day, as the true messengers of God? What are the special characteristics by which they may be known?

Well, first, the true messenger is one who sees the Lord Jesus for himself. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him." To be His herald and witness, John must see Jesus and he must see Jesus coming to him. Those Prophets who lived a long while before the coming of Christ were but dim seers compared with John the Baptist. He was like the morning star which is so near the sun that it is the brightest of the stars. We see it shining almost like a little sun and then, when the sun rises in all its brightness, the star disappears. John was "a burning and a shining light" and all who came before him were, in Christ's judgment, inferior to him. He said to the multitudes concerning John, "What did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a Prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." This was the difference between John and the Prophets—his sight of Christ was clearer than theirs because he was nearer to Christ. And his view of Christ was brighter, fuller and clearer than that of all who had gone before.

Yet they were also true witnesses to Christ, according to the light they had. Our Savior said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: he saw it and was glad." And if he had not seen Christ by faith, he could not have been one of the witnesses who testified beforehand concerning Him. All the Prophets looked through the haze of the ages and, by faith, perceived their Lord. And then they wrote of Him and spoke of Him to the people. The ancient name for a Prophet was a very instructive one—he was called a seer—and you and I, Beloved, must see Christ or else we cannot bear witness to Him. As the Prophets saw Christ by faith and as John actually looked upon Him and then bore witness to Him, so must you and I see Him. Not with these eyes—that sight is reserved until the Resurrection—but with the eyes of our spirit, with the eyes of our mind and heart we must see Jesus before we can rightly speak of Him.

Are you anxious, my Brother, to go and preach? Have you seen Jesus? If not, what can you say when people ask you, "What is He like? Who is He that we should believe in Him?" You must look unto Him before you can speak of Him and, the more steadfastly you gaze upon Him, His work, His offices, His humiliation, His glorification, the better will you be able to bear your witness

concerning Him. You will then speak more surely and confidently for your God if you can testify concerning that which your heart knows to be true because you have perceived and enjoyed it yourself!

Yes, and if you have seen Him in the past, try to see Him, again, and to be continually "looking unto Jesus." Let not any of us go and talk to our Sunday school class, or preach from the pulpit, or write a letter about our Lord until we have had a fresh glimpse of Him. It is wonderful how nimbly the pen or the tongue moves when the eye has just feasted itself upon Christ! The Psalmist said, "My heart is overflowing with a good theme: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." When you have, yourself, been with Christ. When you have just come forth from the ivory palaces of communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus, all your garments will smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia! And your words will have some of the precious savor clinging to them. So again I say that we must see Christ or else we cannot be witnesses to Him.

And, therefore, let us fix our hearts, our thoughts and our meditations so completely upon Christ that when we cry to other men, "Behold the Lamb of God," it will be because we have just beheld Him ourselves! If a man who is blind were to stand up in the street and cry, "Behold," people would be apt to ask, "What can a poor blind man bid us look at? He cannot see anything himself." If you say to the people, "Behold Christ," yet all the while your eyes are turned toward yourself and you are wondering whether you will get through the sermon all right—whether you will have a fine conclusion at the end and what the congregation will think of it when you have done—that will be like saying, "Behold!" while you, yourself, are looking the other way! And other people will look in the same direction! They will be sure to do as you do and not as you say. And if you do not behold Christ, neither will they! Our inward thought, conviction and belief must be in strict accordance with our outward speech, or else we shall misrepresent ourselves—and our message will be poorly delivered and will fall without power upon our hearers.

I also remind you that we must preach Christ as coming. "Why," says one, "He has come!" I know that He has, but He is coming again. It is a blessed thing that, whereas the Prophets saw Him as coming, they only differed from us in this respect—that we can look back to His first coming, as they looked forward to it. And we can also look onward to His coming a second time, "without sin unto salvation"—and so we are to speak of Him as coming. It is grand preaching when the preacher can see Christ coming, when he can behold the Throne of Judgment set and can gaze upon the King in His beauty sitting upon it, and see Him reigning over all, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! It is glorious when he hears the hallelujahs of the approaching millennial age even while he is preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ! "Lo, He comes," he says, and he sees Him coming, for he is not like the virgins who had fallen asleep and so did not watch for the bridegroom's appearing. Oh, for open eyes, expectant hearts and earnest tongues to see, and long for, and tell of our coming Lord! This is the way the faithful witness preaches Him to the people. But, next, the true messenger calls upon men to see Jesus. He calls them away from seeing other things and bids them look, and, "behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" God-sent servants do not say, "Look to the priest! Look to the altar! Look to the sacraments! Look to yourself—come and confess your sins and I will give you absolution!" No, no, no, no! Forever and forever NO! They do nothing of that sort. The priests of Antichrist do that, but the servants of Christ cry, "Behold the Lamb of God." Our great difficulty is to get men's eyes off themselves, off their works,

off their forms and ceremonies, off mere creed-religion and to get them to look at the living Christ who is still among us bearing the sin of all who truly seek His face!

O dear Hearers, I know that I am, in this respect, a faithful witness. Wherever else I fail in my testimony, for my soul's labor and travail, even unto anguish, is to get you away from depending even in the slightest degree upon anything else but what Christ has done! I would not wish you to have the shadow of a shade of a ghost of a pretense of a confidence anywhere out of Christ! Jesus is the only hope of sinners! Let Him be A to you, and Z, and all the letters between—the beginning and the end—and the middle and everything else! Take your eyes off all ministers, all books, all feelings and even all believing! Do not even fix your gaze on your own faith. You know that the eye cannot see itself. Did you ever see your own eye? In a mirror, perhaps, you may have done so, but that was only the reflection of it and you may, in like manner, see the evidence of your faith, but you cannot look at the faith itself. Faith looks away from itself to the Object of faith, even to Christ! And this is what the true witness desires. He will, if he can, keep men from looking anywhere but on his Master!

Some look at their repentance, but if you cannot keep your eyes on Christ, then away with your repentance! Some are always looking to their faith, but if there is a faith that hides Christ, away with it! Some need feelings and right feelings we may wish to have—but as for those feelings which come between us and Christ, away with them! It is not fit that they should live. Our one business is to get men away from anything and from everything, however good it is, that they may look alone to Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God!

The third mark of a true witness is that he leads his own disciples to Jesus. It is generally thought to be a good thing to lead another man's disciples beyond their master, but it is not always so easy to lead our own disciples beyond ourselves. The preacher is often conscious that there are many weak persons who stop short at what he says. To them it is a great help to faith that their pastor or their minister says such-andsuch. Well, for lame people, we do not object to crutches for a time, but we always anxiously pray that the faith of these poor cripples may not stand—at least, for any length of time—in the power of man, but in Christ alone! I would say to you what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, though I wish I could say something that would be worthy to be placed beneath what he said, and so be more suitable for one so much inferior to him. He says, "Though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." That is, "Let us, ourselves, be accursed if we ever dare to lead you away from Christ. It is an imprecation upon our own souls if we dare to make ourselves your masters instead of your servants for Jesus' sake!"

It was a beautiful trait in the character of John the Baptist that he was so ready to pass on to Christ his own disciples—he did not want to keep them merely to swell the number of his own followers, but only kept them with him until he could point them to his Master. When we try to win souls, if we find that people have confidence in us and affection for us, let us use that influence not to attach them to ourselves except with the earnest desire to pass them on to Christ—that they may become disciples of the Savior for themselves and grow up from being babes who have to be nursed to become strong men in Christ Jesus.

One more thing about John the Baptist which is also a characteristic of the true witness for Christ is that he lost himself in his Master. Without a single atom of regret he said, "He must increase, but

I must decrease." Oh, how grandly he witnessed for Christ by sinking himself until he was lost in Christ! And my Brother, it must be the same with you—if you would be a true witness for Christ, you must say that which glorifies Him, even though it dishonors yourself! Perhaps there is a very learned man sitting over yonder and the temptation to the preacher is to say something that shall make him feel that the minister to whom he is listening is not so ignorant as some people suppose. But if there is an unlearned, simple sinner anywhere in the place, the preacher's business is just to chop his words down to that poor man's condition and let the learned hearer receive the same message if he will!

Luther said, "When I am preaching, I see Dr. Jonas sitting there, and Oecolampadius, and Melanchthon and I say to myself, 'Those learned doctors know enough already, so I need not trouble about them. I shall fire at the poor people in the aisles.'" That is the way Luther preached and God richly blessed his ministry because he did it. Though he was a truly learned man, he was willing to be reckoned as knowing nothing at all if by that means he could the better serve his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Dear Brothers and Sisters, when you are serving Christ, do not also seek to serve yourself in a sneaking kind of way. It is easily done— under the appearance of glorifying Christ, you may really be extolling yourself. You may even seek to win souls with the view of having the credit of doing it—and if you do, you will spoil the whole work! It must not be so with you. This royal crown must be touched by none but Christ. You and I cannot really put the crown on His head, though we may wish to do so. Christ is greater than that monarch who, when the Pope was about to crown him, took the crown out of his hands and said, "I won it myself, so I will put it on my own head." And Christ must crown Himself! The words we sometimes sing—

"Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all,"

are very good and right, but, after all, Christ is His own Glory and the Holy Spirit truly glorifies Him. How can we be worthy to put the crown on His head when we are not worthy to unloose the laces of His shoes! Oh, what poor things we are! We are not fit to be the dust under His feet! Glory, glory, glory be unto Him and unto Him alone! Thus I think I have said enough about the true messenger. Aim at being like John the Baptist in these respects, Brothers and Sisters, as God shall help you.

II. But now, secondly, we are to consider THE TRUE MESSAGE which is this—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

In these few words we have the substance of the message to be delivered by God's faithful ministers. First, John declared that God had sent His Son into the world that men might live through Him. He taught that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God, appointed by Him to redeem mankind and that He came into the world on purpose that He might save His people from their sins. Oh, tell this wondrous story! Tell it till every wave bears onward the message and every wind moves it till all born of woman have heard the glad tidings that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All our hopes spring from Christ and Him crucified! They begin with Him and they end with Him. And whoever believes on Him has everlasting life! But whoever rejects Him by not believing Him, there remains no hope for him—he must be lost forever! There is but one way to Heaven, and that one way is marked by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Further, in telling the true message, we must go on to explain that Jesus Christ is thus the Savior because He is the one Sacrifice for sin. This verse reads, in the margin, "Behold the Lamb of God, who bears the sin of the world." And in that rendering there is a great Truth of God which is not to be kept back. Christ Jesus did actually bear the sin of His people in His own body on the tree. It was lifted bodily off those whom it would have crushed forever—and it was laid on Him. He was, indeed, the great Sin-Bearer—He who knew no sin was made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Now here is a point at which some are always sticking. Robertson, of Brighton, with his magnificent genius, practically taught the Atonement in some such fashion as Dr. Duncan used to say, that Jesus Christ did something or other which, in some way or other, in some degree or other, made it possible for men to be forgiven! That was Robertson's notion of the Atonement, but we say not so! We say that He really took the sin of men upon Himself and who can read that marvelous 53rd Chapter of Isaiah without seeing that this is no figure, no metaphor, but literal Truth of God—"the Lord has made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all"! So says the Prophet. But what says the Apostle? "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And I cannot preach the Gospel without proclaiming this great Truth of Christ's atoning Sacrifice and I do not mean to try to do so! I know of no way by which sin can be taken off us except by laying it on Him who was our Surety and our Substitute. And He did take it and He did bear it—and the true messenger, sent from God, tells you that—whatever else he may say or may not say.

And he tells you more than that, namely, what the text says in our Authorized Version. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away"—as well as takes upon Himself—"the sin of the world." Oh, blessed word—takes it away! Where did He take it! I will tell you—"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." He took the sin of all Believers away so completely that it sank into the bottom of the sea! God has cast it behind His back and it shall not be mentioned against them any more forever. There is no such thing, now, as the sin of the saints, for Christ has utterly annihilated it. He came to finish transgression and to make an end of sins—and if He made an end of them, there is an end of them—they are gone forever and those who believe in Jesus are washed white as the driven snow and clothed in His matchless righteousness! This is what the true messenger has to tell, that Jesus bore the sin of His people and that He took it right away. Oh, what joyous work is ours!

This is to be our message—we are to set Christ forth as the Object of faith. We are to say to men, "Behold the Lamb of God." Is that all the sinner has to do? Yes, behold Him! Never was there another Savior like Christ Jesus our Lord. The mere looking at Him saves the soul! Whoever looks to Christ lives by that look and shall live forever. There is not a sinner in Hell who ever looked on Christ with the eyes of faith—and there never shall be such a soul! And all who are in Heaven entered there simply through beholding the slain Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Would you get there, young man? Then behold the Lamb of God and you shall get there! There is life in a look at the Lamb of God. Would you get there, poor sinner, driven and hunted about by the devil? Then behold the Lamb of God! Do but look out of the corner of your eye, if that is all that you can do. Look through your blinding tears. Look through the mists and clouds that surround you. Do but look unto Jesus and, as every bitten one who looked at the bronze serpent, lived, so every sick soul that looks to Christ shall live—and live forever!

That is the Gospel, and it is a blessed Gospel to have to preach! And blessed is the messenger who proclaims boldly and plainly, in the name of Jesus, saying on Christ's behalf, "Look unto Him, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth. Look and live." May many do so at this very moment!

III. Now I close by turning to the third head of my discourse which is THE TRUE RECEPTION OF THE MESSAGE. How can I truly receive this true message of the true messenger? Well, Brothers and Sisters, if we, by faith, "behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," observe what we shall do.

First, we shall follow Jesus. Read from the 35th verse to the 37th — "Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus." That is to say, they did behold the Lamb of God and, believing in Him, they followed Him. And if you have really believed in Christ, you will try to walk in His footprints. You will call Him Master and Lord. He will be your Leader and Commander and you will willingly follow where He leads and cheerfully do what He commands. Christ has not come to give you license to sin, but He has brought you to liberty from sin. Blessed liberty! If you do, indeed, thus look to Christ, follow Him at once! Become His disciple, do what He bids you, feeling that it is—

"Yours not to reason why, Yours not to make reply" but just to do as He commands—and believe what He teaches by the implicit faith which yields itself up entirely to Him. This is the test of real faith in Jesus, that the man is no more his own master, but takes Jesus to be his Master and follows wherever He leads.

The next thing that happens with those who give a true reception to the message is that they want to abide with Christ. The two disciples followed Jesus and, "They said unto Him, Master, where do You dwell?' He said unto them, "Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt and remained with Him that day." I do not know where He dwelt. I am sure that it was not a very luxurious mansion and, in later days, he had nowhere to lay His head. But as soon as ever these men had looked to Him and followed Him, they wanted to live with Him! Oh, that is the highest joy of a Christian, to live with Christ! A look of faith saves the soul because it is the beginning of a life of living with Christ forever and ever! I am afraid that some of God's people fail to realize this blessed living with Christ. They get a little joy and they seem very pleased with it, but in a little time they lose it. Why is that? Because they rejoiced merely in their own joy and when a man does that, he will soon lose it. It is as old Master Brooks says, "If a loving husband were to give his wife earrings, bracelets, jewels and then, instead of loving him for his gifts, she began to be in love with his presents and cared little for him, he would be inclined to take them away from her so as to have all her love for himself."

And surely it is so with Christ. He puts the earring of holy joy in His bride's ears and she begins to say, "Oh, how joyful I am!" No, no, do not talk like that! I heard one, the other day, bragging about his own holiness and I thought to myself, "That holiness which talks about itself is an unholy holiness." Do you think that holiness is a thing to be proclaimed about the streets, or set up for a show? Oh, no! As I think of the thrice-holy God, I lay my face in the very dust before Him. O Brothers and Sisters, true holiness is something very different from this tinsel stuff that men, in these days, boast about as they beat their drums! True holiness beats on its breast and gets away into its place of secret communion—and if it has any beauties, it shows them only to the Lord in

secret, with many a blush and many a lament that it is not much more nearly what it ought to be. O Beloved, may God grant us Grace to follow Jesus and to live with Jesus!

I said that some of God's people do not seem to understand this living with Jesus, but why should not we? Why need we have doubts and fears? Why need we get away from Christ? Had we but the faith He deserves and believed in Him as He ought to be believed in, we might go from joy to joy and so ascend to Heaven as on a ladder of light! God give us this Grace of living with Christ! It is to be had by those who seek it aright.

Then, lastly, the proof which these people, who had seen Christ and followed Him, gave that they had really found Him was that they went and tried to bring others to Him. They said to their kinsfolk and acquaintances, "We have found the Messiah!" "We have found Jesus!" Ah, you have never truly found Jesus if you do not tell others about Him! You know how children act—we ought to be children in all things before God. If a little child, in its rambles, were to find honey and its brothers and sisters were all around, I feel certain that it would give such a cry after it had first sucked its own fingers, that all of them would soon be plunging their hands into the honey, too! You have never tasted its sweetness if it has not made you cry, "Come here! Was there ever such joy as this? Was there ever such delight, such rapture as this?" It is the instinct of true children of God to desire to fetch others in to taste and see that the Lord is good—to share the unspeakable bliss which is already their own!

Many of you are coming to the Lord's Table. As you come to it, I would whisper in your ear, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Never mind that bread and wine unless you can use them as poor old folks often use their spectacles. What do they use them for? To look at? No, to look through them. So, use the bread and wine as a pair of spectacles—look through them and do not be satisfied until you can say, "Yes, yes, I can see the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Then shall the Communion be really what it ought to be to you. God make it so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 1:19-51; Matthew 4:12-24.

John 1:19-20. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent

priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. "I am not the One anointed of God to save mankind."

21. And they asked him, Who then? Are you Elijah? "Are you Elijah come back to earth?"

21. And he said, I am not. For, though indeed he was the true spiritual Elijah who was to come as the forerunner of the Messiah, yet, in the sense in which they asked the question, the only truthful answer was, "I am not."

21. Are you that Prophet? The long-expected prophet foretold by Moses?

21-23. And he answered, No. Then they said unto him, Who are you, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What do you say of yourself? He said, I am the voice. That is all. A voice and nothing more. John did not profess to be the Word—he was only the voice which vocalized that

Word and made it audible to human ears. He came to bear witness to the Christ, but he was not, himself, the Christ. "I am the voice"

23-27. Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. and they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptize you then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose. How wisely does God always choose and fashion His servants! John is evidently just the man for his place—he bears testimony to Christ very clearly. He earnestly turns away all attention from himself to his Master and he has such a reverent esteem for Him of whom he is the herald that he puts all honor and glory upon Him. 28-30. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing, The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, after me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. You know, dear Friends, that Christ existed from all eternity, so, in very truth, He was before John. You know, too, the glory and the excellency of our Divine Master, so that, in another sense, He was and is before John and all other creatures whom He has made.

31-34. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. The secret sign of the descent of the Spirit, in dove-like form, upon our Lord, was given to John. And as soon as he saw it, he knew for sure that Jesus was the Sent One, the Messiah, and that he must point Him out to the people.

35, 36. Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! This was the same text from which he had preached the day before and it was the same sermon, somewhat shortened. So should it be with us—

"His only righteousness I show, His saving truth proclaim 'Tis all my business here below To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

37. The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. Thus John was losing his own disciples. By his testimony to the Truth of God, he was sending them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And he did it well and gracefully. There are many who would find it a hard task to reduce the number of their disciples, but it was not so with John.

38-46. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, What do you seek? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where do You dwell? He said unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah, (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jonah: you shall be called Cephas,

(which is by interpretation, A Stone). The following day Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, and found Philip, and said unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see. It was all a seeing Gospel. John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Then Jesus said, "Come and see." And now Philip says the same. Faith is that blessed sight by which we discern the Savior! Whoever looks to Christ by faith shall live! 47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile! "There is no craft or deception in this man, as there was in Jacob; he is a true Israelite, like Israel at his best."

48. Nathanael said unto Him, How do You know me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. What Nathanael had been doing there, we do not know. Probably he had been meditating, or he may have been engaged in prayer. But this announcement was proof to Nathanael that Jesus could see all things and read men's hearts—and know what they were doing in their chosen retreats. "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Christ knows all of you who came in here tonight, in a prayerful spirit, seeking Him! And whenever men are seeking Him, you can be sure that He is also seeking them!

49. Nathanael answered and said unto Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel. "You saw what I was doing in secret and by that token I perceive that You are God's own Son."

50. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. Those who are ready to believe Christ, on what may be thought to be slender evidence, shall "see greater things than these." "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." They shall gaze upon a wonderful sight, by-and-by!

51. And He said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. "You are a true Israelite, and you shall have Israel's vision. You shall see the same sight as your father, Jacob, saw when he fell asleep with a stone for his pillow! Only your vision shall be far grander than his." Christ always knows how to meet the needs of our hearts and to give us something in accordance with our own expressions, and to make His answers fit our requests—only He always far exceeds all that we ask or even think, blessed be His holy name!

Matthew 4:12. Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee. Notice that there were at that time only two great ministers of God, John the Baptist, he must go to prison and to death—Jesus, the Son of God, He must go to the desert to be tempted of the devil. If any Christians escape temptation, they will not be the leaders of the hosts of God! Those who stand in the van must bear the brunt of the battle. Oh, that all who are called to such responsible positions might be as prepared to occupy them as John was and as Jesus was!

13-16. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali: that it might he fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond

Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which eat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. Oh, the tender mercy of our God! Where the darkness is the deepest, there the Light of God shines the brightest! Christ selects such dark regions as Naphtali and Zebulun that He may dwell there and shine in all His Glory. 17. From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. He was not afraid to give an earnest exhortation to sinners and to bid men repent. He knew better than we do the inability of men concerning all that is good, yet He bade them repent!

18-23. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He said unto them, Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed Him. And going on from there, He saw two more brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. And He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. I like those words, "all manner"—that is, Christ met every kind and every sort of sickness and disease. Perhaps you, dear Friend, are afflicted in your soul after a very peculiar fashion. Yes, but this great Physician heals all manner of diseases! None are excluded from the list of patients whom He can cure! Twice the words, "all manner," are used—"Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

24. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatics and those that had the palsy; and He healed them. Our Lord Jesus lived as in a hospital while He was on earth! Wherever He went, the sins and sorrows of men were all open before His sympathetic gaze. But oh, what joy it must have been to Him to be able to deal so well with them all! Am I addressing any who are sick in soul? Our Master is used to cases just like yours! Your malady is not new to Him. He has healed many like you—of all that were brought to Him, it is written, "He healed them." Lie before Him, now, in all your sin and misery, and breathe the prayer, "Son of David, have mercy on me," and He will surely hear you and heal you, for He delights to bless and save all who trust Him!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN ROOK"—492, 331, 276.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY

TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

John 1,29 #3222 - 'The Lamb of God'

"THE LAMB OF GOD"

NO. 3222

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 20, 1870.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

John 1:29.

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #1987, Volume 33—

"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD" and #2646, Volume 45—

THE BAPTIST'S MESSAGE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at

http://.]

BEFORE we plunge into our main subject, it is necessary to notice what is implied in our text, which is that "the world" was lost through sin and that all mankind had become guilty before God. You, therefore, my dear Hearer, are one of those who are thus guilty. Though you may never have broken the laws of your country, nor even the rules of propriety. Though you may be both amiable and admirable in your general deportment, yet, for all this, as "there is none righteous, no, not one," you, also, are included among the unrighteous! It matters not what religious professions you may have made, or what outward forms of godliness you may have observed—unless you have a better righteousness than your own, you are a lost sinner! I believe there is now present a Brother who, when he was first convicted of sin, tried hard to make himself a better man under the mistaken idea that this was the way of salvation. And when, one Sabbath night, he heard me say that all the reforms you could ever make upon your old nature would be useless as to the matter of salvation, but that, "you must be born-again," he felt very angry and made a vow that he would never be found listening to me again! Yet here he is, rejoicing that the Lord has taught him to see himself as a lost, ruined sinner and to put his heart's trust in Jesus Christ, the sinner's Savior!

It is very likely that if I had time to explain to you, my Hearer, the fullness of your sin and the utter ruin of your natural state, you, also, would grow angry. You would have no cause to be angry, for all that I could say would fall far short of the truth about your real condition in the sight of God! And it is most solemnly important for you to know that however high you may stand in the ranks of

merely moral men, you are a lost soul and a condemned soul, as long as you remain without living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! If you are angry with the minister of the Gospel who tells you this Truth of God, you are as foolish as a certain Brahmin whom I have heard of. His religion consisted chiefly in not eating any animal food or destroying any kind of life. The missionary told him that it was impossible for him to carry out such a "religion" as that, "for," he said, "in every drop of water that you drink, you swallow thousands of animals and so destroy vast quantities of animal life." Then he put a drop of water out of the cup from which the Brahmin had been drinking, under his microscope and so convinced him of the truth of what he had said. When the Brahmin saw the creatures moving in the water, instead of abandoning his false theory, he grew very angry and dashed the microscope upon the ground! He was not angry, you see, with the fact, but with that which revealed the fact! Like the lazy housemaid who said she was quite sure that she always kept the rooms clean but, it was the nasty sun that would shine in and make everything look so dusty! The fault is not in the Gospel which we preach—so you should not be angry with it, or with us—the fault is in yourselves, in your own hearts and lives, and if you do not like to be told the truth about sin, it is a sure sign that your heart is not right in the sight of God! It is still true that "everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Well then, with that Truth of God taken for granted—that you, whom I am now addressing, have sinned and are, therefore, under God's condemnation unless you are trusting in Christ—we now come directly to our text. We shall take it not merely as though John the Baptist were speaking it, but as we may now use it from our point of view. It appears to me to be the whole Gospel in a very brief form. You may sometimes write much in a very few words and here you have an epitome of the whole Gospel of God in these few syllables—"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." I am going to ask and try to answer three questions. First, what is to be beheld? Secondly, what is to be done? And thirdly, why should we do this?

I. First, then WHAT IS TO BE BEHELD? The text mentions a Lamb, by which is meant a sacrifice. Under the

Jewish Law, those who had offended brought sacrifices and offered them to God. These sacrifices were representations of our Lord Jesus Christ who is, "the Lamb of God." Listen, my dear Hearer, and I will tell you the Gospel in a few sentences. As God is just, it is inevitable that sin should be punished. If He would pardon you, how can this be righteously accomplished? Only thus—Jesus Christ, His Son, came to earth and stood in the place of all those who believe on Him and God accepted Him as the substitutionary Sacrifice for all those who put their trust in Him. Under the Jewish Law, the lamb was put to death that the man might not be put to death and, in like manner, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, suffered the pangs of death by crucifixion and the greater agony of the wrath of God that we might not suffer the pangs of Hell and the eternal wrath which is due to sin. There is no other way of salvation under Heaven but this! God cannot relax His Justice and He will by no means clear the guilty. But He laid upon Christ the full punishment that was due to sin and smote Him as though He had been the actual offender, and now, turning round to you, He tells you that if you trust in Jesus, the merits of His great atoning Sacrifice shall be imputed to you and you shall live forever in Glory because Jesus died upon the Cross of Calvary. If any of you would have your sins forgiven, and so enjoy peace with God, you must look by faith to that Sacrifice which was offered upon Calvary and keep your eyes of faith fixed there—and sooner or

later you will certainly receive the blessings of peace into your souls!

But the text not only mentions a Lamb, it says, "Behold the Lamb of God," and I draw your special attention to that expression. It is not merely a Sacrifice to which you are to look, but the Sacrifice that God has appointed and ordained to be the one and only Sacrifice for sin! This is an all-important point. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief." If Christ had not been sent of God to be the Savior of sinners, our faith would have had no firm foundation to rest upon. But as God Himself has set forth Christ to be the Propitiation for human guilt, then He cannot reject the sinner who accepts that Propitiation! I need not raise any questions as to whether Christ's Atonement is sufficient, for God says that it is and as He is satisfied with the Sacrifice offered by His only-begotten and wellbeloved Son, surely the most troubled conscience may be equally satisfied with it! Your offense, my Friend, was committed against God. If, then, God is content with what Christ has done on your behalf, and so is willing to pardon you, surely you need not enquire any further, but with gratitude you should at once accept the reconciliation which Christ has made! It is "the Lamb of God" whom I have to bid you, "behold." It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on Calvary, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." It was God who appointed Him to die as the Substitute for sinners. It was God who accepted this Sacrifice when He died and now, Jehovah, Himself, speaking from His Throne of Glory, says to the sinner, "Believe on My Son whom I have set forth as the Propitiation for human sin. Trust in Him and you shall be eternally saved."

Still further, to bring out the full force of the text, notice the next words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." When Jesus Christ was put into our place, our sin was laid upon Him and sin, like anything else, cannot be in two places at one time. If, then, I, being a Believer in Jesus, know that all my sin was laid upon Christ, it necessarily follows that I have no sin left upon me! It has become Christ's burden. He has taken it away from me. "Yes," you say, "but then the sin is still on Christ." Ah, but my Hearers, if our Lord Jesus Christ, "Himself bore our sins in His own body up on the tree," He there endured all the punishment that was due to us, or an equivalent for it, and those sins were by that means put away—that is to say, they ceased to be—so they do not exist any longer! All my indebtedness to God was transferred to Christ and He paid all my debts! Then where are my debts now? Why, there are none! They are all gone forever. This is what Christ does for everyone who truly trusts in Him—He takes that man's sins absolutely out of existence so that they cease to be! Christ has accomplished the

Volume 56 3great work described to Daniel by the angel Gabriel—He has finished the transgression, made an end of sins—what a strong expression that is!— made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness! How gloriously He has put sin right away for all who believe in Him! "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Of all sinners in the whole world who believe in Jesus Christ, it may be truly said that all their sins are gone past all recall— God has cast them into the depths of the Red Sea of the Savior's blood and they shall not be remembered against them any more forever! It is thus that the Lamb of God takes or bears away sin!

But whose sin does He take away? The text says, "the sin of the world." By this expression I believe is intended the sin not only of the Jews, but of Jews and Gentiles, alike—the sin not only of a few sinners, but of all sinners in the whole world who come to Jesus and put their trust in Him!

He has so taken away "the sin of the world" that every sinner in the world who will come to Him and trust in Him, shall have all his sins put away forever! Whether he is Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free, if he truly believes in Jesus, it is certain that Christ took all his sins away. Whether he was born 1800 years ago, or whether he shall be born in the ages that are yet to come, does not make any difference to this fact—Christ has borne his sins if he trusts in Jesus as his own Savior. This is the sign and token by which he may assuredly know that he has a saving and eternal interest in the precious blood of Jesus—"He that believes on Him is not condemned." The gate of Divine Grace is set very wide open in our text—if it were not, some poor sinners would be afraid to enter! "Oh," asks one, "is this mercy for me? Is it for me?" Well, Friend, I will ask you a question— will you trust Christ? Will you come to Him this very moment and take the mercy that He freely presents to all who will accept it? If so, I am sure that it is yours—as sure as I am that it is mine!

Possibly someone has come in here tonight hoping to hear something new, but I have nothing new to tell, nor do I wish ever to have anything more new than this—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Or this, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When Dr. Judson went home to America from Burma, there was a large congregation gathered together and they requested the returned missionary, the veteran of so many years of service, to address the assembly. He stood up and simply told the story that I have again told you tonight—the story of Christ suffering in the place of sinners and of Christ saving all who trust Him. Then he sat down and one who sat next to him said to him, "I am afraid the friends are rather disappointed—they expected to hear something interesting from you." He said, "I have spoken to them to the best of my ability upon the most interesting subject in the whole world! What could I have done better than that?" "Yes," said the other, "but after having been so long abroad, they thought that you would tell them some interesting story. They did not think you would come all the way from Burma just to tell them only that." The missionary then rose and said, "I should like to go home feeling that although I have come all the way from Burma, I do not know anything that I can tell you that I think is half as good for you to hear, or half as interesting, as the story of the love of Christ in dying to save sinners."

The good doctor was right and I feel just as he did—that there is nothing so interesting as the story of the Cross! You need to hear it, you who are already saved. And you need to hear it, you who are not yet saved! You must hear it, for there is no hope of salvation for you except as faith shall come to you by hearing—and especially hearing that portion of the Word of God which deals most closely with the Cross of Christ!

One night, a dissolving-view lecture upon the Holy Land was being given and, as the audience, sitting in darkness, looked at a picture of Jerusalem, they were startled by a voice asking, "Where is Calvary?" Ah, and that is the question that many of you need to ask—"Where is Calvary?" There must you turn your eyes where, between the two thieves, your Savior died. If you really look to Him as He dies there for guilty sinners, you are saved! And then whatever else you do not know, you know enough to save you, for you are wise unto eternal life! May the Lord graciously make you thus wise through the effectual working of His everblessed Spirit! So then, God in human flesh, the Divinely-appointed Sacrifice for human guilt, "the Lamb of God," is what you are bid, in our text, to "behold."

II. But now, secondly, WHAT ARE WE TO DO? How are we to have a part and lot in that great Sacrifice which Christ

offered on Calvary? The answer of the text is, "Behold"—that is, look to "the Lamb of God."—

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One!"

"Behold the Lamb of God" means believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in Him as your Savior, accept God's Revelation concerning Him and rely upon Him to save you. This is the way of salvation!

Notice how opposed this is to the idea that we are critically to understand the Doctrines of the Gospel before we can be saved. How many persons there are who want to know this and to understand that! They come to us and say, "Here are two texts that do not seem, to us, to square with one another, and there are those two Doctrines of Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility which do not appear to be consistent with each other. Must we understand all the mysteries before we can be saved?" O foolish people! They remind me of one who is shipwrecked and who, as the lifeboat comes up to the sinking ship, or to the spar upon which he is floating, says to the captain, "Before I can get on board that lifeboat, I want to know the exact number of planks there are in it. And I really do not think that knowing that would content me—I would also like to know how many rivets and bolts there are in the boat. And I also need to know what is the theory of the operation of the oars upon the waves and how it is that boats are propelled." If a man ever did talk thus, I am pretty sure that the captain of the lifeboat would exclaim, "What a fool that man is!

Volume 56 5He is in danger of drowning, yet he talks like this! Come into the boat at once, or we must leave you to perish!" And I also feel that you unconverted sinners have no business to set yourselves up as critics of the Word of God! There is something much simpler than that for you to do— and the text bids you do it—"Behold the Lamb of God." Do not sit down to manufacture difficulties—"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." There are various ways of using a piece of bread. One man may take it and employ it in rubbing out the pencil marks which he has made upon a sheet of paper. Another man may take it to an analyst and ask him to see how much alum the baker may have put into it. But the really hungry man—the one who gets the most good out of the piece of bread—eats it! And that is what I recommend you to do with the Gospel—not begin to turn it about this way and that, not ask all manner of questions concerning it—but feed upon it! And the way to feed upon it is to accept it, believe it and especially to put your trust in Jesus Christ, who is the very Essence of the Gospel!

"Behold the Lamb of God," says the text—then that command is opposed to the question that troubles so many—whether they are elect or not! That is like wanting to read Hebrew before one has learned to speak English! Such people are not content to learn the A B C, the elements, the rudiments of the Gospel, first—they first want to know the Gospel's classics, or mathematics, or metaphysics—but that cannot be! During the recent hard frosts I have struck up an acquaintance with a little friend who, I am afraid, may desert me, by-and-by, but our friendship has been exceedingly pleasant to each of us thus far. On the little balcony outside my study windows, I observed a robin frequently coming, so I took an opportunity, one morning, to put some crumbs there and I have done the same thing every morning since. And my little feathered friend comes

close up to the window frame and picks up the crumbs. And I do not perceive that he has any difficulty about whether the crumbs were laid there for him, or whether I had any electing love towards him in my heart. There were the crumbs—he needed them and he picked them up and ate them! And I can tell you that in doing so, he exactly fulfilled my purpose in putting the crumbs there! I thought that he acted very wisely and I think that if a poor sinner wants mercy—and he sees that there is mercy to be had—he had better not pause to ask, "Did God decree me to have it?" But go on and take it and he will then find that in doing so, he is fulfilling God's decree! My little robin friend is very wise in his way, for he has called a friend of his to join him at the feast on the balcony. How he did it, I do not know, but he managed to tell a blackbird all about the crumbs—and he brought him last Friday morning to see them for himself. The blackbird was rather shy at first, and stood for a while on the iron bar of the balcony. But after looking in at the study window, he happened down and neither he nor the robin asked whether it was my purpose that the blackbird should have any of the crumbs! But there were the crumbs and they were both hungry, so they came and fed together. So, if any of you find Jesus Christ for yourselves and you know some poor soul who needs Him, do not begin asking whether it is God's purpose or decree that he, also, should find the Savior—go and invite him to come to Jesus and then both of you come to the Savior together— and then, just as the robin and blackbird exactly fulfilled my purpose in throwing out the crumbs, so, when you and your friend come to Christ, you will rejoice to find that you have, both of you, fulfilled the eternal purpose of the Divine Decree of the great heart of God! It is not your business to look into the book of God's secret purposes, but to look to Christ, or, as our text puts it, to, "behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Ah, but this beholding of the Lamb of God is a thing to which men cannot readily be brought! I know many whose consciences are truly awakened and who see themselves as sinners in the sight of God, but instead of beholding the Lamb of God, they are continually beholding themselves! I do not think that they have any confidence in their own righteousness, but they are afraid that they do not feel their guilt as much as they ought. They think that they are not yet sufficiently awakened, sufficiently humbled, sufficiently penitent and so on, and thus they fix their eyes upon themselves in the hope of getting peace with God! Suppose that yesterday or the day before, you had felt very cold and, therefore, you had gone outside your house and fixed your gaze upon the ice and the snow—do you think that sight would have warmed you? Now you know you would have been getting colder all the time! Suppose you are very poor and you studiously fix your mind's eye upon your empty pocket—do you think that will enrich you? Or imagine that you have had an accident and that one of your bones is broken—if you think very seriously of that broken bone, do you think that your consideration will mend it? Yet some sinners seem to imagine that salvation can come to them through their consideration of their lost and ruined condition! My dear unconverted Hearers, you are lost whether you know it or not! Take that fact for granted. If you would be saved, look not at yourselves, but "behold the Lamb of God." He has been sent by His Father to be the Savior of sinners and it is by trust in Him that peace and pardon will come to you! I pray you not to suppose, for a single moment that your repentance, your tears, or your softened heart can prepare you for Christ! Do not come to Christ because you have a tender heart, but come to Christ to get a tender heart! Do not come to Him because you are fit to come, but because you need to be made fit! And remember that—

"All the fitness He requires Is to feel your need of Him. This He gives you 'Tis the Spirit's rising beam!"

Give up looking at yourself and "behold the Lamb of God."

Let me also, dear Friend, warn you against the notion that your prayers can save you apart from beholding Christ. I believe that it is both the duty and the privilege of every living soul to pray—but that the first command to a sinner is to pray, I deny! There first command is, "Believe on the

Volume 56 7Lord Jesus Christ." And when you have done that, you will soon get to praying. I think it is stated in McCheyne's life, that after an earnest sermon, he found a man under deep concern of soul. And after saying a word or two to him, he said, "I cannot stay longer with you, myself, but there is one of my elders who will pray with you." The elder did so and he prayed in so fervent a fashion that it was remarked that he seemed to be like Jacob wrestling with the Angel until he prevailed. The man afterwards came to see Mr. McCheyne and said to him, "I am very thankful that I was at your Church that night. I feel very happy and I believe I am saved." "Well," said McCheyne, "what makes you feel so happy?" "Oh," he said, "I have great faith in that good man's prayers." McCheyne at once said, "My Friend, I am afraid that good man's prayers will ruin you! If that is where you are putting your confidence, you are utterly mistaken." He was quite right. And your own prayers will be just such an obstacle in your way if you trust to them instead of trusting to Christ! "I know I pray," says one, "and I am very earnest in prayer." Well, I am glad of that as far as it goes, but if you have not something better to trust to than your own prayers, your prayers will ruin you— for the look of faith is not to be given to prayer, but to Christ! Our text says, "Behold the Lamb of God." I have told you what that means—look by faith to the Sacrifice that Christ made for sinners on the Cross at Calvary—but if you look to anything else for salvation, you will not find it! Even your prayers, apart from faith in Christ, will not save you from everlasting destruction! O Sinner, get away from everything else and come to Christ—

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus, Can do helpless sinners good!"

This great Truth of God, that believing is the Divinely-appointed means of salvation, may be illustrated by the old story of the children of Israel and the serpent of brass. [Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this subject, are

as follows—#153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT; #285, Volume 5—MAN'S RUIN AND GOD'S REMEDY and #1500, Volume 25—NUMBER 1500—OR, LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] You

have heard it scores of times, yet I beg you to listen to it once more! When the people were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, they were commanded to look at the serpent of brass that was lifted upon a pole—and whoever looked, lived. They had nothing to do but look! Moses lifted up the serpent and pointed to it and cried, "Look! Look! Look! And be healed." Possibly there were some who said they were bitten too badly to look. Well, if they could not or did not look, they would die. They might think it was a proof of their humility to say, "We are too sick to be cured," but if they did so, they would die whether they were humble or not! O my Hearer, do not be lost through a mock humility which is really abominable pride! You are not too great a sinner to be saved! I will venture to say that you will dishonor Christ if you ever think such a thing! So let not that sinful

thought destroy you!

There may have been others who said, "We shall not look to the bronze serpent for we have only got a mere scratch—it will soon be gone." But you know a poison scratch means death and if your sin were only a scratch (it is much more than that) it would mean eternal damnation for you! So look to Jesus, I implore you, just as you are! Look now! Look and live!

Perhaps there was one who said, "My father had a famous recipe for serpent bites. It was given to him by a celebrated doctor in Egypt, so we will mix up the proper ingredients and so get cured." Well, if any who were bitten were to act and speak like that, they would all die—the deadly venom would certainly destroy them, whatever ointments they might use! A look at the bronze serpent gave life, but the refusal to look brought death.

There may have been some fine gentlemen there who had imbibed skeptical notions during their life in Egypt. They were so clever that they thought they knew a great deal more than the Lord's servant to whom God had specially revealed the only effectual remedy, so they turned on their heels and said, "Such a remedy as this is utterly ridiculous! It is not according to the laws of physics that the mere looking at a piece of brass can heal people of the bites of snakes!" So they perished. Notwithstanding all their learning and wit, notwithstanding their jeers at the Divinelyappointed remedy, they perished. And nobody in the whole camp was healed except those who were simple enough and wise enough to take God at His word. Then, though they were terribly bitten, though their blood was set on fire by the poison and though some of them were in a truly desperate state—when they just looked at the bronze serpent—in a moment their blood again flowed healthily through their veins and their strength returned to them in all its former vigor! And, dear Friends, there shall be no soul saved in the whole world except by looking to the crucified Christ of Calvary! All trust in christening, (or even in Baptism), in confirmation, in sacraments, in ceremonies, in priests, popes and relics—are all lies—but as long as God's Word remains true, he who looks by faith to Christ, alone, must and shall be eternally saved! Oh, how can I utter this Truth of God so as to make it plainer, or how shall I plead with you so as to bring you all to trust in Christ? I cannot do this, but I pray the Holy Spirit to do it, for He can—and then you will believe in Jesus and so receive everlasting life!

III. I must not detain you longer, as our time has fled. Otherwise I was to have answered a third question, WHY SHOULD WE THUS LOOK?

The answer would have been that God has appointed this as the only way of salvation, that those who obey the command of the text will obtain immediate salvation and that, being saved, they shall have joy and peace in believing! But you who neglect or refuse to "behold the Lamb of God" must, without doubt, everlastingly perish! Of His infinite mercy, may God graciously grant that none whom I am now addressing may refuse to believe in Jesus, but may everyone look to Him and live—live now, and live forever!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 1:1-34.

Volume 56 9Verse 1. In the beginning was the Word. Christ the Word has existed from all eternity! He is the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father. He is really what Melchisedec was metaphorically,

"having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." "In the beginning was the Word."

1. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was as truly God as the Father was God, and as the Spirit was God. "These Three are One," and have always been One. "Very God of very God" is that Jesus whom we trust, love and adore!

2-5. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. The light of Christ shone many times amid the darkness that enshrouded the world before His coming to live here in the flesh, yet comparatively few recognized that light and rejoiced in it. Christ's light shines more brightly now, but the dark, benighted soul of man perceives not the brightness of our spiritual Lord until the Holy Spirit works the mighty miracle of Regeneration and so gives sight to those who have been blind.

6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. What a descent it is from, "The Word of God," to the "man sent from God, whose name was John." Jesus Himself said concerning John, "Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Yet, from the greatest of Prophets, what a climb it is to get up to Jesus Christ, the Son of God! "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John."

7-9. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world. John could not do that—he could only bear witness to Christ, the true Light, who alone is able to illuminate, in a larger or lesser degree, "every man that comes into the world."

10. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. Oh, what terrible estrangement sin has caused between God and man! What dreadful ignorance sin has created in the human mind! The world was made by Christ, yet "the world knew Him not."

11. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. To those who were chosen as "His own" out of all the nations upon the earth, to those to whom He was especially promised of old, to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—to these Jesus came, yet they "received Him not."

12. But—This is a blessed, "But." Though Christ's own nation, the Jews, as a whole "received Him not," there was "a remnant according to the election of Grace," there were some who received Him. "But"—

12. As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. How came those persons to receive Him when others rejected Him? There must have been some great change worked in them to make them different from the rest of their countrymen. And truly there was, for these were twice-born men—

13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. [See Sermon #2259, Volume 38—THE SIMPLICITY AND SUBLIMITY

OF SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

So that those who receive Christ, those who truly believe on Christ, are people who have been born, as others have not been born, by a new birth from Heaven—a supernatural birth, so that they are a people set apart by themselves as those who have been created twice—first as human beings just like others, and then as new creatures in Christ Jesus!

14-18. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of Grace and Truth. John bore witness of Him and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that came after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace

[See Sermons #858, Volume 15—THE FULLNESS OF JESUS THE TREASURY OF SAINTS and #1169, Volume 20—THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST THE TREASURY OF THE SAINTS—Read/download both

sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] for the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. There is no way of knowing God and being reconciled to God except as we receive Jesus Christ, His Son, into our hearts and learn of Him all that He delights to reveal to us concerning His Father through the Holy Spirit's teaching.

19-23. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then, Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, who are you, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice—Not the Word, but "the voice" by which the Word was to be made known—"I am the voice"—

23-27. Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose. See the true humility of this faithful servant of Christ! He does not dream of putting His own name side by side with his Master's. The unloosing of shoe laces was work for a slave to do, but if we are privileged to perform this work for Christ, it will make us as kings before Him! To do anything for Christ—to have even a menial's place in His palace is better than being an emperor

Volume 56 11 among men! May we have the portion of those who are not ashamed to unloose the laces of Christ's shoes!

28-31. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordon, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not—"When first I saw Him"—

31-34. But that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me,

Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Since John's time, many others have borne similar testimony. We, also, have received Him and rejoice to say that He has baptized us with the Holy Spirit. All that John said of Him is true—and much more than John said is also true. He is the Lamb of God who has taken upon Himself the sin of all who believe in Him and, therefore, He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. Oh, that all men would receive the testimony concerning Him which we find in this blessed Book—and which we delight to repeat in His name!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

John 1,35-36 #2329 - The Lamb of God in Scripture

THE LAMB OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

NO. 2329

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 8, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 25, 1889.

"Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking

at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

John 1:35-36.

You all know the old, old story. The world was lost. God must punish sin. He sent His Son to take our sin upon Him that He might honor the Law of God and establish God's government by being obedient to the Law of God and yielding Himself up to the death penalty. He whom Jehovah loves beyond all else came to earth, became a Man and, as a Man, was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. It is He who is called, in our text, "the Lamb of God," the one Sacrifice for man's sin. There is no putting away of sin without sacrifice—there is only one Sacrifice that can put away sin—and that is Jesus Christ, the Righteous. He is Divine, yet Human—Son of God, yet Son of Mary. He yielded up His life, "the Just for the unjust," the Sinless for the sinful, "that He might bring us to God," and reconcile us to the great Father. That is the story and whoever believes in Him shall live. Any man, the world over, who will trust himself to Christ, God's great Sacrifice, shall be saved, for this is our continual witness, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Tonight I do not intend so much to preach a sermon as to urge those who have seen the Lamb of God to look at Him more intently, to study Him more and especially to plead for the power of the Holy Spirit to reveal Him to them. I want to entreat men who have looked elsewhere, to now turn their eyes away from the fruitless search after peace and life, and to come and, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." May the Spirit of God open their eyes and incline their hearts that, tonight, even tonight, they may look unto Him and live!

When John saw Jesus Christ on that memorable day, he, first of all, beheld Him, himself, and then he said to others, "Behold the Lamb of God." "Looking at Jesus as He walked," steadfastly beholding Him, watching Him, gazing with humble admiration at Him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Brethren, we cannot preach what we have not practiced! If these eyes have never looked to Jesus, how can I bid your eyes look at

Volume 39 1Him? Beholding Him, I found peace to my soul. I, who was disposed, even, to despair, rose from the depths of anguish to the heights of joy by looking unto Him! And I, therefore, dare to say to you, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Oh, that each one of you might believe our testimony concerning Jesus and look to Him and live!

What did John mean by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God"? Behold, in the Latin, "ecce," is a note of admiration, of wonderment, of exclamation. "Behold the Lamb of God!" There was nothing of greater wonder ever seen than that God, Himself, should provide the Lamb for the Burnt Offering, that He should provide His only Son out of His very bosom, that He should give the delight of His heart to die for us! Well may we behold this great wonder! Angels admire and marvel at this mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh! They have never left off wondering and adoring the Grace of God that gave Jesus to be the Sacrifice for guilty men. Behold and wonder, never leave off wondering—tell it as a wonder, think of it as a wonder, sing of it as a wonder! Even in Heaven you will not cease to wonder at this glorious Lamb of God!

I think that John also meant his disciples to consider, when he said to them, "Behold the Lamb of God!" So we say to you, "Think of Him, study Him, know all that you can about Him, look Him up and down. He is God—do you understand that He stood in the sinner's place? He is Man— do you know how near akin He is to you, how sympathetic He is—a Brother born for your adversity? The Person of Christ is a great marvel— how can God and man be in one Person? It is impossible for us to tell. We believe what we cannot comprehend and we rejoice in what we cannot understand! He whom God has provided to be your Savior is both God and Man—He can lay His hand upon both parties. He can touch your manhood in its weakness and touch the Godhead in its All-Sufficiency! Study Christ! The most excellent of all the sciences is the knowledge of a crucified Savior. He is most learned in the university of Heaven who knows most of Christ. He who has known most of Him still says that His love surpasses knowledge. Behold Him, then, with wonder! And behold Him with thankfulness.

But when John says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" he means more than wondering or considering. "Looking" is used in Scripture for faith—"Look unto Me and be you saved." Therefore we sing—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One, There is life at this moment for you!"

Beholding is a steady kind of looking. Believe then, in Christ with a solid, abiding confidence. Come, you sinners, come, and trust your Savior, not for tonight, only, but forever! Believe that He is able and willing to save you and trust Him to do so—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly, Let no other trust intrude."

Take your eyes off everything else and behold the Lamb of God! You need not see anything else, nothing else is worth seeing, but behold Him. See how He takes your guilt, see how He bears it, see how He sinks under it and yet rises from it, crying, "It is finished!" He gives up the ghost. He is buried. He rises again from the dead because He is accepted of God and His redeeming work is done. Trust Him, trust Him, trust Him! "Look and live," is now our message—not, "do and live," but, "live and do!" If you ask how you are to live, our answer is look, trust, believe, confide, rest in Christ—and the moment you do so, you are saved!

But, once more, when John said to His disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!" it was a hint that they should leave off looking at John and turn their attention wholly to Jesus and follow Him. Hence we find that John's two disciples left him and became the disciples of Christ. Beloved, we who preach long to have your attention, but when you give your attention to us, our longing, then, is to pass it on to Christ our Lord. Look on Him and follow Him, not us! What can we do, poor creatures that we are? Look unto Him! Mark His footsteps! Walk in them. Do as He bids you! Take Him for your Lord, become His disciples, His servants. Behold the Lamb of God and always behold Him! Look to Him, look up to Him and follow where He leads the way.

Thus I have put the text before you pretty simply. Now I want to talk to you a little about beholding this Lamb of God, taking a hasty run through various Scripture references to the lamb. And I will ask you, first, to Behold the Lamb of God in His connections with men. And secondly to Behold the Lamb of God in His benedictions to men.

I. Let us, first, BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD IN HIS CONNECTIONS WITH MEN.

How was the Lamb of God first seen in the world? It was the case of the lamb for one man, brought by one man for himself, and on his own behalf. You all know that I refer to Abel, who was a shepherd, and brought of the firstlings of his flock, that is, a lamb, and he brought this lamb for himself, and on his own account, that he might be accepted of God, and that he might present to God an offering well-pleasing in His sight. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground as an offering to God. I think that there was a difference in the sacrifice, as well as in the man bringing it, for the Holy Spirit says little about the difference of the man, but He says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," and he was accepted because he brought a more excellent sacrifice. The one sacrifice was bloodless, the fruit of the ground—the other was typical of Christ, the Lamb of God and was, therefore, accepted. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

Now, Beloved, our first view of Christ usually is here, to know Him for ourselves. I am a sinner and I want to have communion with my God— how shall I obtain it? I am guilty, I am sinful—how shall I draw near to the holy God? Here is the answer. Take the Lord Jesus Christ to be yours by faith and bring Him to God! You must be accepted if you bring Christ with you! The Father never repelled the Son, nor one who was clothed with the Son's righteousness, or who pleaded the Son's merit. Come you, as Abel came, not with fruits of your own growing, but with the sacrifice of blood— with Christ, the Holy Victim, the spotless Lamb of God—and so coming, whoever you may be, you shall be acceptable before God by faith. Now, behold Him, each one of you for yourself!

I know what someone will say, "I hope to do that, by-and-by." I hope you do not so deceive yourself! I have heard that there was once a great meeting in the den of the arch-enemy and he was stirring up his lackeys to seek the destruction of men. One of them said, "I have gone forth and I have told men that there is no God, and no hereafter, and no difference between sin and righteousness, and that they may live as they like!" And there was considerable approbation among the evil spirits. But Satan, himself, said, "You have done small service, for man has a conscience, and his conscience teaches him better. He knows that there is a God. He knows that there is a difference between sin and righteousness. He knows that there must be future punishment. You have done but little." Then another stood up, and said, "I have done better, I think, most Mighty Chieftain, for I have told them that the Bible is a worn-out book, that it was a

fable at the first, and that they need not believe it." There was a round of cheers, for they said that he had done splendid service for the cause of darkness.

But Satan said, "It is in vain that you meddle with the old Book! It has taken care of itself and it can still do so. There is no shaking it, it is like a rock. You have done service for a time, but it will soon pass away." And scarcely did any of the fallen spirits, after that, venture to bring forward his boasting in the presence of the terrible master who sat in the midst of them. But, at last, one said, "I have told men that they have souls, and that there is a God, and that the Bible is true. I have left them to believe as they will, but I have whispered in their ears that there is plenty of time to consider all this." Then there was a hush—and the great master of demons said, "You have done best of all. This is my great net in which I take more souls than with any other, this net of procrastination or delay."

Therefore say I to you, my Hearers, disappoint the fiend! Fly to Jesus. Fly to Jesus at once! Behold, not tomorrow, but tonight! Behold the Lamb of God, each man for himself!

Now turn over the pages of this grand old Book and you will find the Lamb, next, in another connection. Israel was in Egypt and there they had the lamb for the family—"In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house." Oh, I wish that you would all go on to behold the Lamb of God for your households! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Why do you stop before you finish the verse? What said the Apostle to the trembling jailor? Not merely all that I have quoted, but more— "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." Are there not many Believers who do not believe for their house? Come, now, and believe in this provision of the Lamb for the house! Trust the Grace of God for that little girl, the last born, and for that boy who is still at school, who does not think much of these things as yet—and for that son of yours who has left home and gone out as an apprentice. Oh, that the Lamb of God might be for him! Pray for him, tonight, and you older parents, pray for your sons who are married, and your daughters who have taken to themselves husbands and are away from you! The Lamb is for the house, pray for the whole household, tonight—take in your grandchildren, all you old folks—all of them who are in your house. Pray that the Lamb may be for the house!

I bless God that I can look upon all my household and rejoice that they are converted to Christ! My father has this joy, too! And my grandfather also had that joy! Oh, it is a great bliss to have families, generation after generation, all brought to Christ without exception! Why should it not be so? Let us cry for it! Surely we may expect the same blessing that God gave to His chosen people under the Law and expect it more largely. Grace does not run in the blood, but Grace often runs side by side with it, so that Abraham is loved, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Ephraim, and Manasseh. Thus the Covenant blessing goes on from one to another. Plead with God, tonight, that all in your house may be beneath the sprinkled blood of the Lamb and be saved from the destroying angel—and that all with you may go out of Egypt to have a possession in the land of the promise!

A little further on, following the Scripture, and asking you to still behold the Lamb, in the 29th chapter of that famous Book of Exodus, at the 38th and 39th verses, we come across God's command for the lamb for the people—"Now this is that which you shall offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year, day by day, continually. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the

other lamb you shall offer at even." Here is the lamb for all the chosen people, the lamb for Israel! It began with the unit, it went on to the family and here the Lord, who "loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," makes His Tabernacle to be the central place where a lamb shall be offered for the whole nation! Think of it with delight, tonight, that Christ died for all His chosen people! He has redeemed them from among men. Though they are as many as the stars for number, or as the sand on the seashore, innumerable, yet that one Sacrifice has redeemed them all! Glory be to God for the blood of the Lamb by which the whole of Christ's people are redeemed!

Then let your mind take wing right out of the Old Testament into the New, for I have not time to trace all the successive steps. Come now to John, saying, in the 29th verse of this chapter, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Now you have gone beyond the bounds of Israel, and have come to the Lamb for the world. You have come to the Lamb of God who dies for Gentiles as well as for Jews, for men in the isles of the sea, for men in the wilds of Africa, for men of every color and every race, and every time, and every clime! Oh, glory be to God, wherever there are men, we may go and tell them of Christ! Wherever there are men born of Adam's race, we may tell them of the Second Adam, to whom looking, they who look shall live—and in Him they shall find eternal life! I love to think of the breaking down of the boundaries that shut in the flow of Grace to one nation! Behold, it flows over all Asia Minor, at first, and then over all Greece, and then to Rome, and Paul talks of going to Spain and the Gospel is borne across the sea to England, and from this country it has gone out unto the utmost ends of the earth!

Well now, take your flight, if you can get beyond that, away to Heaven, itself, and there you will see the Lamb for all Heaven! Look at Revelation, the seventh chapter, and the 14th verse. No, you need not look it up, for you know it. All the saints in Heaven are standing in their glittering ranks, white-robed, pure as the driven snow. They sing and praise one glorious name, when one of the elders first asked the question, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and from where did they come?" He, himself, gave the answer, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—

"Round the altar priests confess, If their robes are white as snow, 'Twas the Savior's righteousness, And His blood that made them so."

The blood of the Lamb has whitened all the saints who are in Heaven! They sing of Him who loved them and laved [washed] them from their sins in His own blood! I have often wondered why that second word was not brought into our translation, for it so beautifully fits the language of the beloved Apostle John—"Unto Him that loved us, and laved us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." There is no whiteness in Heaven but what the Lamb has worked, no brightness there but what the Lamb has bought! Everything there shows the wondrous power and surpassing merit of the Lamb of God!

If it is possible to think of something more glorious than I have already described, I think you will find it in the fifth chapter of Revelation, at the 13th verse—"And every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." The day shall come when, from every place that God has made, there shall be heard the voice of praise unto the Lamb—there shall be found everywhere men and

women redeemed by blood, angels and glorious spirits, rejoicing to adore Him who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty Lamb of God!

I think I have given you something to consider if you turn over the pages of Scripture and follow the track of the bleeding Lamb.

II. But now, taking you again over the same road a little, I want you, in the second place, to BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD IN HIS BENEDICTIONS TO MEN. The first blessing of all is that of Abel. He was accepted of God. He offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Well now, let anybody here who does not know it, try to learn this lesson tonight. You can only be "accepted in the Beloved." God loves His Son with such an overflowing love that He has love enough for you, love enough for me—if we are in Christ Jesus. He is the great conduit or channel of God's love and that love flows through all the pipes to every soul that believes in Jesus. Hide behind your Lord and you are safe! Trust His name, living and dying, and nothing can harm you. How many dear hearts, when passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death—when grim thoughts have clustered about them—have been cheered and comforted by the thought of Christ! Remember the monk who, as he died, put away the priest, the crucifix and everything else, and cried, "Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera, Jesu!" "Your wounds, Jesus! Your wounds, Jesus!" I am not saved by what I can do, but by what He has done—not by what I have suffered, but by what He has endured. There hangs our everlasting hope—we trust to Christ in life and in death and we are accepted for His sake! Come, every sinner, bring the Lamb of God! Put Him on the altar and you shall be accepted at once, and you may at once begin to praise the name of the Lord!

But then, as we go on, we find this Lamb of God useful, not only for acceptance, but also for rescue and deliverance. It is a dark and dreadful night. Egypt shivers and stands aghast. And just at midnight flies forth an angel, armed with the sword of death. In every house of Egypt there is heard a wail, for the firstborn is dead, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the woman who turns the mill to grind the daily corn. Death is in every house! No, stop—there are houses wherein there is no death! What has secured those habitations? The father took a lamb, shed its blood, dipped a bunch of hyssop in it and smeared the lintel and the two side posts—and then all sat down and feasted, undisturbed, on the lamb—calm and happy. They rejoiced to have for food that lamb whose blood was the ensign of their safety. There was no crying, there, no dying there! Death could not touch the inhabitants of the house that was marked with the blood of the paschal lamb. Beloved, you and I are perfectly safe if we are sheltered beneath the blood of the Lamb of God! Nothing can harm us, everything must bless us—and we may go to our beds, tonight, singing—

"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,

I lay me down to rest, As in the embraces of my God, Or on my Savior's breast."

We may rise tomorrow morning, if we are spared, and go into this busy world without any fear. The broad arrow of the King is set upon us in the blood-mark of the atoning Sacrifice, and we are safe, and safe forever. Glory be to the name of the Lord for this!

Nor was that all. As I have told you, the blood of the paschal lamb was not only sprinkled for the protection of the house, but its flesh was the food of the inhabitants. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we do not, at first, know what it is to feed on Christ! We are satisfied to be sprinkled with His blood, but

the Believer, afterwards, finds that Christ is the food of his soul. His blood is drink, indeed, and His flesh is meat, indeed. Oh, what a festival have we kept over the Person of our Lord! Sometimes, when faint and hungry, we have begun to think of the Incarnate God, the bleeding Lamb, the full Atonement paid, and we have said, "My soul is full, satisfied with favor, full of the blessing of the Lord." I do not know what there is in the Gospel if you take away the Atoning Sacrifice. It seems to me that there would be nothing left but chaff which might suit asses and horses, but would not be fit for men. Look to Jesus Christ dying in our place and here is something for the soul to feed upon, yes, and to be satisfied with, as with marrow and fatness!

I pointed you, a little further on, to the lamb in the wilderness, the lamb offered up every day. That brings us to another point in our Lord's work. We have had Christ for acceptance, Christ for safety, and Christ for food, now we have Christ for perpetual resort. The Lamb of God in the morning! Oh, blessed be God for a Savior in the morning! If the night has gathered anything of evil, He does then disperse it, as the sun dispels the darkness. But oh, what a precious thing to also have the Lamb of God in the evening! If in the day we have soiled our feet in traversing this busy world, here we come to the Fountain and we are made clean through the blood of the Lamb! Perpetual merit, perpetual intercession, perpetual lifegiving, perpetual salvation flow from Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God! He is not slain twice. His one wonderful offering has finished transgression and made an end of sin, but its efficacy continues as though He were sacrificed often, always supplying us with merit, so that, in effect, His wounds continually bleed. He is always a new Savior for me every morning, always a new Savior every night and yet always the same Savior, the same Christ! There is no getting weary of Him, there is nothing "stale" in Him. They may talk about "a new view of the Atonement." I have no view of the Atonement but this—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And that old view of the Atonement is always fresh and always new to the heart and conscience!

Well now, Beloved, when we again come to John, following our former run of thought, we find the Lamb of God useful for guidance, for when John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," the two disciples followed Jesus and we read of some, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." The Lamb is our Guide. The Lord is a Shepherd as well as a Lamb, and the flock following in His footsteps is safely led. My Soul, when you need to know which way to go, behold the Lamb of God! Ask, "What would Jesus do?" Then do what Jesus would have done in such a case and you can not do amiss.

Further on we find such a passage as this, telling us of victory through the Lamb of God—"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." The Lamb is a great Warrior—there is none like He. Is He not the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Though He is gentle as a lamb, yet against sin and iniquity He is fiercer than a young lion when it roars on its prey. If we follow Him, hold fast His Truth, believe in His Atonement and perpetually proclaim His Gospel, we shall overcome all error, all sin and all evil!

Well now, this blessed Lamb—it is not easy to leave off talking about Him when one once begins—one is so blessed that you may well behold Him, for all happiness comes through Him. In Heaven you will see nothing without Him. "Nothing," you ask? No, nothing—here is a proof of my words. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." All the light, the knowledge, the joy, the bliss of

Heaven come through the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ! Not Jesus only, but Jesus slain, Jesus the Lamb of God is the very Light of Heaven!

And what do you think is the joy-day of Heaven, the time for the highest exultation? Why, the joyous day when all the golden bells shall peal out their glorious melodies, and all the silver trumpets shall ring out their jubilant notes will be the day of the marriage of the Lamb! It is the Heaven of Heaven, the climax of ineffable delight!! And the voice of the great multitude, as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunder, sings, "Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." So that, at the topmost round of the ladder of eternal bliss, there you find the Lamb! You cannot get beyond Him. He gives you all He has, even Himself. Behold Him, then, and go on beholding Him throughout the countless ages of eternity!

I would to God that you had all beheld Him, and I pray you to behold Him tonight. It is but a little while and the death-film will gather about your eyes—and if you have not seen the Lamb while yet you have mortal eyes, you will see Him, you will certainly see Him—but your vision will be like that of Balaam. "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not near." If it is with you, "not now," it may be, "not near." It will be an awful thing to see the Lamb with a gulf between yourself and Him, for there is a great, impassable gulf fixed in the next world—and when you see Him across that gulf, how will you feel? Then shall you cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Jesus will still be a Lamb, even to the lost—it is "the wrath of the Lamb" that they will dread! The Lamb is always conspicuous. He may be neglected, rejected, refused tonight, but He will be beheld in eternity and beheld to your everlasting confusion and unutterable dismay if you refuse to behold Him now. Let it not be so with any of you—

"You sinners, seek His face, Whose wrath you cannot bear! Fly to the shelter of His Cross, And find salvation there." Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 1:1-37.

John is the majestic Evangelist. He is the high-soaring eagle with piercing eyes. His is the Gospel of the Son of God!

Verses 1-3. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. We cannot describe the Deity of Christ in clearer language than John uses. He was with God. He was God. He did the works of God, for He was the Creator. If any doubt His Deity, they must do so in distinct defiance of the language of Holy Scripture!

4, 5. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. Christ is still not understood. Jesus is still not known. How should darkness understand the Light of God? It opposes the Light of God—it has to flee before light, but it does not, it cannot understand the Light of God! O God, work a miracle in our dark hearts and fill them with the Light of Christ!

6, 7. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. That is our business, too. We who are ministers sent from God bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him may believe. Oh, how often we go home and cry, "Who has believed our report?" We do not ask you to believe in us—no, but in our Master, whose heralds we are. If we can lead you to faith in Him, we shall be glad, indeed! But, if not, we will sorrow because we have missed our mark and failed in our purpose.

8, 9. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world. If any man has saving Light, true Light, he gets it through Christ. There is no other Light—all other light is but darkness visible. The Light in which we see God comes from Jesus.

10. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. Strange was it that the Creator came to His own earth and yet He was unknown. Men mistook Him, they hated Him, they crucified Him whom they ought to have entertained with sacred hospitality and worshipped with holy loyalty.

11, 12. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. All men are not the sons of God! The doctrine of the universal Fatherhood is utterly untrue! They only become the sons of God who receive Christ and believe on His name. Otherwise they are heirs of wrath, even as others—

"To them gave He power to become the sons of God." 13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. There is another birth beside the natural one— never does the birth of the flesh make us Christians! If our ancestry should be a line of saints, yet are we born sinners—we must be born again if we are to become saints. If we could trace our pedigree to a perfect man, if such there is, yet the birth by the flesh would not avail us. Sons of God are, "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

14. And the Word was made flesh. Here was the Incarnation of Him who made all things. He that is God, "was made flesh."

14. And dwelt among us, (and we—The Apostles 14. Beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full

of Grace and truth. Oh, all you who would know Christ, learn that He is worth the knowing! He is full of Grace for your sinnership and full of truth for your ignorance! He can cleanse and He can teach. There is everything in Him that you need. You shall not be deceived, for He is full of the Truth of God—you shall not be rejected, for He is full of Grace.

15-18. John bore witness of Him and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace. For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time. He is too high, too spiritual to be perceived by human senses.

18. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. What of God we need to know, we may see in Christ— enough to save us, enough to sanctify us, enough

to make us all like the only-begotten Son of the Father.

19, 20. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. With indignation he must have repelled the idea that he was the Messiah—

"I am not the Christ."

21-23. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who are you? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice—Humbly he reduces himself to a voice, but he was not "a voice and nothing more." There was much that was mighty and wise in that voice.

23-27. Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptize you, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to unloose. How John hides himself behind his Master! He was a most worthy man, a truly great man, but he counted himself unworthy of the most menial service for Christ and felt honored by filling the office of a slave to unloosen His Master's shoelaces. It is better to be the slave of Christ than to rule vast empires! He who truly serves Him is glorified thereby.

28, 29. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto Him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. Now is he bringing out his message! Now is he pointing out his Master.

30, 31. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not. John knew Jesus very well, but he did not know Him as the Sent One of God, the Messiah, till after he had received the sign and token at His baptism. "I knew Him not."

31-34. But that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore have I come, baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God. Jesus and John must have been well acquainted with one another—they were closely related—but John was not to know anybody as the Messiah till he received the token from God. When he saw that token, then he officially knew and he bore instant witness—"This is the Son of God."

35, 36. Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked. With holy reverence, with loving awe, gazing upon this extraordinary Person—"as He walked"—

36, 37. He said," Behold the Lamb of God!" And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. This is our one business tonight, to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

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John 1,36 #1060 - Behold the Lamb!

BEHOLD THE LAMB!

NO. 1060

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 14 1872,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold the Lamb of God!"

John 1:36.

IT IS the preacher's principal business—I think I might say, his only business—to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" For this reason was John born and sent into the world, and such were the prophecies which went before concerning him. If he had been the most eloquent preacher of repentance. If he had been the most earnest declaimer against the sins of the times, he would, nevertheless, have missed his lifework if he had forgotten to say, "Behold the Lamb of God." He did well when he baptized the repenting crowd. He spoke nobly when he faced the Pharisees and was a true hero when he rebuked Herod. But above all his chief errand was to herald the Messiah, to bear witness to the Son of God!

What we have said of John we may say of every God-sent minister—he is sent to bear witness to the Christ of God and whatever else he may do, if he does not this continually, habitually, earnestly—he is not fulfilling the errand for which his Master sent him, but has turned aside to baser ends. When any one of us who are called ministers shall die and come before the Lord to give our account, it will be a sorry thing for us if we can only say, "Lord, I have preached the dogmas of the Church to which I belonged," unless we can also add that we have directed men to the living Savior.

Vain will it be to have argued with accurate logic and persuaded with lofty rhetoric unless we have uplifted Christ among the people. It will be idle to say, "I have preached against the skepticism of the times. I have rebuked the sins which raged around me and have proclaimed what I knew of the glory of God in Nature and in Providence," for our chief and distinguishing work is to declare the name of the Lord Jesus and the power of His precious blood. As the stars called "the Pointers" always point to the Pole star, so must we always point to the Redeemer.

I think the minister who has failed to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God," may expect at the last to be cut in pieces and to have his portion with the tormentors. I can scarcely conceive a doom too terrible for the man who dazzled his hearers with oratorical fireworks when he ought to have lifted up the Cross, or mocked immortal souls with the carved stone of his elocution when they were starving for the Bread of Heaven. Sermons without Christ condemn the preacher and delude the hearer. Sermons which do not point to Christ in them will be as hard to answer for as blasphemy or

murder when the Judge is on His great white throne. It is cruel to amuse with trifles those whose souls are in jeopardy of eternal fire! Playing with men's souls is murderous work and truly, if the Lamb of God is not preached, the ministry is playing with souls, if not worse. John, however, most thoroughly discharged his lifework, for he was ever saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." Notice in the text the attitude of the preacher, for it is very instructive. "Looking upon Jesus as He walked," John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The preacher's eyes should be upon his Master while he points to his Master. They preach Christ best who see Him best. John had his own eyes fastened upon Jesus and therefore he did, by his own example as well as by his words, say, "Behold the Lamb of God."

If you will take your place in a crowded street and stand for a few minutes looking at a certain object in the heavens, or gaze upward as if something were there to be seen, you will soon find that without asking others to do the same, a company will gather round you and begin to look in the same direction. Indeed, a vast crowd might be collected by no other action than by your gazing intently into the air! So John, in addition to his saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," was doing the best thing to attract others to behold Him—when he fixed his own eyes on Jesus—with a fixed wondering, admiring, adoring gaze.

John had no eyes for anyone but "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," and therefore his words had point and power in them. And note that John's eyes were upon Christ not only when Christ was coming to him, but as He walked by him! Well may the preacher have his Master before him when his Master is cheering him with His fellowship and honoring him with His Presence. But on this occasion Jesus was walking alone, as though in meditation, with His eyes probably bent upon the ground. It was not meet that He should always be coming to John—He had done that once and so had put an honor upon His servant.

But this time He came not to him lest men should think that He had a dependence upon John—He walked in quiet musing as though His thoughts were otherwise occupied. Nevertheless the Baptist had not forgotten his Lord, but again pointed Him out. If the Lord denies to the preacher His comfortable Presence; if no light of fellowship shines forth from the brow of the Crucified, it is still ours whenever and wherever we preach to let the eye of faith realize Christ as present and still to cry to others with a heart that palpitates in union with our words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Even when I preach in chains I would labor to honor Jesus, looking to Him as the End and Object of every word I utter! It is mine to preach a Savior in whom I believe, whom having not seen, I love. I am looking to Him now for everything, even as I would have you do. I see in Him superlative beauties which I wish you to see and I worship a Divinity in Him which I desire you to worship. I preach not to you an unknown God or an untried Savior! There is something notable in our text as to the hearers. This was a brief but weighty sermon, worthy to be preached a thousand times. Nobody needs a new sermon when, "Behold the Lamb of God," is the old one!

John had delivered this same discourse before an assembled crowd, but now he had only two hearers and those two were not unconverted persons—they were his own disciples—and they were at least very near to the kingdom if not already in it. Yet to the solitary two and those already discipled he had only the same message to deliver, "Behold the Lamb of God." He was a man of rich mind and ready utterance yet he kept to this one point in all companies. It is thought that if we

go into the theater to preach to the mob, we must be sure to preach Christ—let me ask you what subject would be fitter for an assembly of saints? I pray you tell me!

It has been said that he who preaches in the street ought to confine himself to the simple Gospel—my Brothers, in what place would that subject be inappropriate or unprofitable? Paul knew nothing among the Corinthians save Jesus Christ and Him crucified—the resolve is a safe one for all companies. In this respect some preachers know too much and the sooner they join the holy know-nothings the better. Christ is appropriate as a subject for two disciples as well as for a thousand scoffers, for while He is the Resurrection to those who are dead, He is also the Life of those who have been already quickened.

No subject is more sweet, more refreshing, more inspiriting, more sanctifying to the saint than the Cross of our dying Lord! The sinner needs it if he would be saved, but the saint requires it that he may persevere, advance, conquer and attain perfection. Give me that harp and let my fingers never leave its strings—the harp whose strings resound the love of Christ alone! To harp upon the name of Jesus is the blessed monotony of a true ministry—a monotony more full of variety than all other subjects besides. When Jesus is the first, the midst, and the last, yes, All in All, then do we make full proof of our ministry. We do well when we are able to say, "of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum, we have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens." May Christ be "All in All" in all our ministries, for so shall we prove that God has called us to testify concerning His Son Jesus!

This may serve as an introduction to our subject. Now let us take the text itself. John says, "Behold the Lamb of God." And first let us behold Jesus and know Him to be the Lamb of God. It will be well to be fully assured upon that point and heartily to accept the witness of God concerning His Son. When we have done so, let us secondly behold Him—that is contemplate Him and humbly and attentively view Him as the great Propitiation, the true Sacrifice for sin. Then thirdly, beholding Him again, let us gather instruction from the Redeemer's appearance as the Lamb of God. And fourthly, let us behold Him, that is, reverently adore Him in His blessed capacity as the Lamb slain.

I. First, then, let us behold our Lord and LEARN THAT HE IS THE LAMB OF GOD. What does the term, "the Lamb of God," mean? The Hebrews are accustomed that a thing is "of God" when they mean that it is the greatest, the noblest, the chief of the kind. For instance, they call the cedars, "trees of God," and the thunder is the "voice of God." Therefore we may understand, in the first place, by the expression, "the Lamb of God," that Jesus is the chief of all sacrifices, the first of all offerings by which atonement is made to God for sin.

And truly He is so. He stands above all others because He contains all others. All other sacrifices of God's ordaining were but pictures, representations, symbols and shadows of Himself. There is only one Sacrifice for sin—there never was another and there never can be. All those offerings under the Aaronic priesthood which were presented because of sin were only representations of the one Sacrifice—they were that and nothing more. Jesus far excels them all. Beloved, if you need to see the Lamb that Abel offered on the altar, the lamb because of which God accepted his faith and had respect unto him, you must see Jesus Christ, for we are accepted only in the Beloved.

God has respect unto any man who brings this Sacrifice—but unto any who bring a bloodless sacrifice, such as the priests of Rome foolishly do when they offer the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, unto them God has no respect and never can have. The blood of Jesus once presented has forever put away sin and no further sin-offering can be brought. Whoever rests in Jesus as the true and only Sacrifice is accepted in his faith. If you desire to see the Lamb which Noah offered when he came out of the ark, together with other sacrifices of which it is said that, "The Lord smelled a sweet savor of rest," you must look to Jesus Christ—for the bullocks, rams and lambs of Noah all pointed to the one sweet savor offering of Christ Jesus offered upon the Cross, where God and the souls of all Believers meet in blessed union and find sweetest rest.

This, Beloved, is the Lamb of which Abraham spoke when he said to Isaac, "My son, God will provide Himself a Lamb." And today if you would understand the paschal supper, first of all, spread on that dread night when the destroying angel went through Egypt and smote the first born of all her land—if you would know who it is whose blood is the true Passover when it is sprinkled upon the conscience and whose flesh is meat, indeed, when it is fed upon by the children of God—you must look to Jesus, for He is the Lamb of God's Passover.

And if, pursuing your studies, your thoughts should turn into the tabernacle of old, or into Solomon's Temple and you should see each morning a lamb slaughtered and its blood poured out, and each evening the same sacrifice repeated—if you desire to know what was intended by the morning and evening lambs you will find that they were but lambs of men, lambs presented by men, but they pointed to the Lamb of God in whom their teaching is all summed up. He is the Substance of that of which they were but the shadow. Jesus is the Lamb of the morning slain from before the foundation of the world and He is the Lamb of the evening offered up in these last days for His people.

Thus might we speak of all other sacrifices and show that in Jesus they are all fulfilled. Atonement for sin is truly and in very deed to be found in the Son of God. In Him, alone, is there remission, for in His blood, alone, is there efficacy to satisfy the Law of God. Stern as the Truth of God is, we ought never to flinch from repeating it—that sin cannot be put away under the moral government of God without punishment. This is a rule from which there is no variation and there should be none, for if justice is left unsatisfied, the foundations of society are out of course.

Infinite Wisdom has found for us a door of escape by the way of a vicarious Sacrifice, but that way does not violate justice. Seeing that we originally fell by the sin of another, namely, our representative Adam, God has seen fit that we should rise through the righteousness and sufferings of another, namely, Jesus, the second Adam. Because Jesus was one with His people, and their federal Head, it was just to allow Him to suffer in their place and He has so done. Apart from this, every man must bear his own burden of sin and punishment. The only possible way by which a man can be forgiven his sin is by that sin being punished in his legal Representative—the Lord Jesus.

Jesus has borne, Himself, what every believing sinner ought to have borne, or an equivalent for it, sufficient to recompense the injury done to eternal justice. No other person could be a Substitute for our sin, for no other is our Head and Representative before God, and yet Himself innocent. There is none other name given under Heaven by which we may be saved. The Lord Jesus is of God appointed and provided to be the one vicarious Sufferer, the true bearer away of the sin of the

world by enduring its penalty in His own Person so that whoever believes in Him is redeemed from the punishment of sin. That is the Gospel!

I would sooner state it in the most simple language than have the power to deliver an impromptu poem, though it should excel the productions of Homer or Milton. There is more of precious truth and priceless learning in that faithful saying that, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" than in the most profound discourse, or the most stately epic. Be thankful that you have heard it! Be thankful that there is forgiveness with God because Jesus Christ has become the Savior of men. O fellow Sinner, you may approach your God without being plunged into suffering yourself, or needing to bring a victim with you, for Jesus Christ has been brought as a lamb to the slaughter and His soul has been made an offering for sin! Tremble not, but receive the reconciliation effected by the Lamb of God! Come boldly, for the way is open and man is invited to approach his God.

Moreover, our Savior is called the Lamb of God, not only, par excellence, because He is, beyond all others such, but, secondly, because He is the Lamb of God's appointing. God from all eternity appointed the Lord Jesus! He was chosen and ordained to be the great Sacrifice for Sin. So was it decreed and written of Him in the volume of the Book, that oldest of books, "I delight to do Your will O God." In the fullness of time Jesus came to do the Father's will and therefore it is plain that there was such a will to do, such a decree to fulfill. Jesus is elect, precious!

Peter tells us that the Lord Jesus is "a Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained from before the foundation of the world." Jesus is the choice of the Father. Our hearts rejoice that it is so, for when we rely upon Jesus Christ to save us, we trust in One whom God has appointed to save His people. If, as a poor guilty sinner, I leave my sin upon Christ, the Lamb of God, I leave it where God has bid me cast it, namely, on the appointed Scapegoat. I rest in a Sacrifice which God, Himself, ordained of old to be the Sacrifice for sin. O Soul, there can be no question that if you come to the Father in the way in which He, Himself, appoints, you come acceptably!

For if you were not accepted, you might well say, "O God, You have set forth Christ as a Savior and yet You do not save men through Him. You have bid Him say, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,' yet I have come and You have cast me out! This is far from You, Lord." Such an event shall never happen. No human lips shall utter such a complaint. God's appointment is the guarantee of the acceptance of everyone that believes in Jesus.

Thirdly, Christ is called the "Lamb of God" because He is of God's providing. The Father not only appointed His Son to be the Sacrifice for sin, but He gave Him freely to be such. Out of the bosom of God came Jesus Christ as love's richest blessing. He is the Father's only begotten, God's dear Son, and to us, "His unspeakable gift." "He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the Propitiation of our sins."

Men were bid to provide the sacrifice under the Law, but the one Sacrifice of the Gospel is the gift of God. "This is the record that God has given to us, eternal life, and that life is in His Son." It endears Jesus to us to know that He is the dearest pledge of Jehovah's love to His chosen. And then, fourthly, He is not only of God's appointing and God's giving, but He is of God's offering. Let

us never forget that Jesus Christ was not presented to God by a human priest—there might, then, have been some mistake in the sacrifice. It was not left to the sons of Aaron to offer up this true sacrifice to God. We may be quite sure that the Offering was presented in fit order and in an acceptable way—it is written, "It pleased the Father to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

God Himself had a hand in the sufferings of His Son! What does that cry mean, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" but that God, Himself, had turned away from Him and so had brought His soul into the extremity of woe? What do the Scriptures say? Is it not the Father's voice which says, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow"? Oh, Beloved, when I think of this, that God chose His Son to be the Atonement, that He gave His Son—and then, Himself, did, as it were, like another Abraham, offer up His own Isaac—I feel that the Sacrifice must be acceptable and all sufficient, so that he who rests in it need not have a shadow of a doubt but that his soul is saved!

One other reflection here—this Sacrifice is also of God's setting forth to the sons of men. Remember the text, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." When we, as God's ambassadors, tell you of Jesus Christ, we do not so in our name but we do our Lord's bidding and God Himself, by us, is setting Christ forth, showing Him, revealing Him, exhibiting Him and bidding you come to Him. "Behold," says God "I have given Him for a Covenant to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people."

This is God's will, that Christ should be made known to the ends of the earth! Everywhere Jesus is to be preached, whether men will bow before Him or not. We are quite sure we are doing God's will when we are setting forth Christ, for we are bid to go into all the world and preach Him to every creature. Assuredly, what the Lord thus sets forth He intends to give to those who seek it. There are no mockeries with God! He does not exhibit bread and refuse it to the hungry, or set garments before the naked and refuse it to them. Happy are the men who see Jesus set forth manifestly crucified among them, for they have good ground to hope in Him!

Now then, Sinner, look at this. You want to be rid of your sin. You are conscious of it this morning, and you do confess it with shame. Well then, God's way of pardoning you is that your sin be laid on Jesus. As far as you are concerned, you can obtain all the merit of the great Atonement of Calvary by a simple act of faith. As of old the Jew laid his hands upon the victim and then the victim was his substitute, so if you do but lay your trembling hands upon Christ, He suffered for you! He was an Atonement for you, and what a blessed Atonement! Let us rehearse that point again— He is the Chief of all sacrifices, the Sacrifice of God's ordaining, of God's bestowing, of God's presenting, and now of God's setting forth to you!

What more would you have? In order that all things might be of God in this matter, from first to last, Jesus is the Lamb of God—is not this well? Jesus is God's own chosen Savior—what can be better? On what surer ground would you wish to rest? O that you were led to receive Him now to be yours forever! Jesus is my All, and I am a man as you are! Why should He not be your All, also? I feel as if I could tarry here just a minute and pass round among all this audience this one solemn question for each one to answer—will you accept Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, to be unto your soul the Lamb of God which takes away your sin? Come, what do you say?

It is ours to point to Him and to bear our witness—will you accept our testimony? Truly He is a great God and a Savior! We have trusted in Him and we are not confused. Oh, if the Spirit of God sweetly leads you, now, to say from your heart—

"My faith does lay her hand On that dear head of Yours While like a penitent I stand, And there confess my sin"—

it is indeed well with you both for time and eternity . Be of good cheer— your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! Go your way, you are accepted in the Beloved! Your iniquities are blotted out like a cloud—not one of them shall be mentioned against you any more forever! O blessed Spirit of God, out of Your great mercy grant that many and many a heart may lay hold upon the Lord Jesus at this hour!

II. But now we most pass on to a second point. "Behold the Lamb of God," that is, let us CONTEMPLATE JESUS UNDER THAT CHARACTER. Let us meditate upon Him for a few minutes and then let us constantly fix our thoughts upon Him. Jesus Christ, as the atoning Sacrifice, ought to be the principal Object of every Believer's thoughts. There are other subjects in the world which we must think of, for we are yet in the body—but this one Subject ought to engross our souls, and, as the birds fly to their nests so ought we, whenever our minds are let loose—to fly back to Jesus Christ.

He should be the main Topic of each day's consideration and of each night's reflection. We might, with truthfulness, transfer the words of the first Psalm, and say, "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Christ of God and who meditates in Him both day and night; for he shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper."

To meditate much upon the Lamb of God is to occupy your minds with the grandest Subject of thought in the universe! All others are flat compared with Him! What are the sciences but human ignorance set forth in order? What are the classics but the choicest of Babel's jargon when compared with His teachings? What are the poets but dreamers, and philosophers but fools in His Presence? Jesus alone is wisdom, beauty, eloquence and power! No theme for contemplation can at all equal this noblest of all topics—God allied to human nature! Just think—God the Infinite—Incarnate among sons of men! Marvel at God in union with humanity taking human sin--out of stupendous love condescending to be numbered with the transgressors and to suffer for sin that was not his own!

O Wonder and Romance, if men desire you, they may find you here! O Love, if men seek you, here alone, they may behold you! O Wisdom, if men dig for you, here shall they discover your purest ore! O Happiness, if men pine for you, you dwell with the Christ of God and they enjoy you who live in Him. O Lord Jesus, You are all we need!—

"Such as find You find such sweetness Deep, mysterious and unknown; Far above all worldly pleasures, If they were to meet in one."

You may search the heavens above and the earth beneath. You may penetrate the secret mysteries to find out the callow principles and the beginnings of things, but you shall find more in the Man of Nazareth, the equal with God, than in all else besides!

He is the Sum and Substance of all truth, the Essence of all creation, the Soul of life! He is the Light of light, the Heaven of heavens, and yet He is greater, far, than all this, or all else that I could utter! There is no subject in the world so vast, so sublime, so pure, so elevating, so Divine! Give me to behold the Lord Jesus and my eyes see every precious thing! Brothers and Sisters, no subject so well balances the soul as Jesus, the Lamb of God! Other themes disturb the mental equilibrium and overload one faculty at the expense of others.

I have noticed in theology that certain Brethren meditate almost exclusively upon doctrine, and I think it is not severely critical to say that they have a tendency to become hard, rigid, and far too militant. It is to be feared that some doctrinalists miss the spirit of Christ in fighting for the words of Christ. God forbid I should speak against earnestly contending for the true faith, but still, without fellowship with the living Savior we may, through controversy, become ill-developed and one-sided.

I think I have noticed that Brethren who give all their thoughts to experience are also somewhat out of square. Some of them dwell upon the experience of human corruption until they acquire a melancholy temperament and are at the same time apt to censure those who enjoy the liberty of the children. Other Brethren turn all their attention to the brighter side of experience and these are not always free from the spirit of carnal security which leads them to look down upon trembling and anxious hearts as though they could not possess true faith in God. I think, also, that I have noticed that those who pay all their homage at the shrine of practical theology have a tendency to become legal and to exchange the privileges of Believers for the bondage of servants. This also is a grievous fault.

But when a man takes Christ Jesus crucified to be his mind's main thought he has all things in one—doctrine, experience and practice combined! As Canaan contained Carmel, and Sharon, and Eshcol, and Hermon, so Jesus comprehends all good things. If "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" is the object of our thoughts we have wine and milk, butter and honey, the fat of the kidneys, wheat and oil out of the rock, all in one. "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me," "a cluster of camphor in the vineyards of Engedi."—

"All human beauties, all Divine In my Beloved meet and shine."

Beloved, this, indeed, is the most necessary Subject of contemplation that can be brought before you! You may forget many other things without serious damage, and even upon important matters you may somewhat err and yet be safe—but you must live upon Christ, your souls must meditate on Him—or else you have left the bread from the feast and missed the water from the well! The crucified Savior is as necessary for our meditation as the air is for our breathing. The blood of Jesus is the life-blood of true religion—a bloodless faith is a lifeless faith.

I stood yesterday by the little open grave of one of our orphans and it said far more to me than I could say to those who mourned around it, for it reminded me that there is nothing worth living for beneath the sky, since all things are as a dream. Then I thought within myself, as I looked on the poor orphan lads around me—yes, there is something to live for—to help the poor and train the young, and to make men holier and happier. But then I remembered that they, too, like myself, were dying creatures and therefore even the benefit received by them would also pass away. To live, then, for men is, as far as eternity is concerned, an unsatisfactory thing unless there is some

higher light in which to view it.

But when the heart lives for Jesus it is not less philanthropic, for it loves men for His sake, but its object melts into the Divine, for we love God when we love Jesus since He is very God of very God. Beloved, this leads me to the very marrow of the matter—to believe in Jesus as Divine is essential to real Christianity—and one of the distinguishing subjects of faith which separate Christians from other men. Individuals are to be found who possess great admiration for the Prophet of Nazareth but they know Him not as the Son of God, or as the Lamb of God. They deny His Divinity and reject His Atonement.

With fair words and oily speeches they compliment His Character and bedaub His name with their worthless praises. Yet they are not Christians and the name is dishonored when they wear it! Of late we have heard deniers of our Lord's Divinity spoken of as Christian Brethren. Now my common sense does not enable me to see how a man can be called a Christian who rejects Christ! Charity by all manner of means, but not falsehood! Union certainly, but not union in deadly error! Confederacy with those who do not believe Jesus Christ to be God and deny His atoning Sacrifice? It is treason to the Lord of Glory! Such persons may be excellent Muslims, or Jews, or pure Theists, but they are not Christians! And if they wrongly assume that title we ought not to concede it to them. In this matter he that is not with our Lord is against Him, and he that gathers not with Him scatters abroad. Without a distinct and hearty recognition of our Lord's Deity and Atonement, how can a man be a partaker of Christ at all? True Christians have no questions about these Truths of God—Jesus is to them the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, and the Son of God whom the world shall yet adore!

III. Now let us pass on to a third run of thought, but indulge in it very briefly. Let us behold the Lamb of God, that is, GATHER INSTRUCTION FROM JESUS UNDER THAT ASPECT. I beg you to gather some doctrinal instruction. If the Sacrifice provided by God for human sin must be none other than the Son of God Himself, then sin is a gigantic evil, and necessarily the punishment of sin is stupendous, too.

I observe with pain the attempt that is made to lower the meaning of Scripture upon the subject of the penalty due to sin. It has been usually believed to be everlasting, but this is now denied—denied in the teeth of express Scriptures! Now the moment we begin to mitigate our thought of Hell's terrors, we also lower our idea of sin's evil—and with it we also decrease our estimate of the Savior. All things in the temple of Truth are to scale. If you take the inch scale which now seems to be getting popular you diminish the dimensions throughout! A little Hell involves a little Atonement. But, to be consistent, grant a Divine Savior an infinite Sacrifice and you grant the infinite demerit of sin and then the eternity of future punishment is seen to be consistent.

All these Truths in Scripture lean the one upon the other and your judgment upon every other will be affected by your opinion of any one. Do not err, I pray you. Uplift the Christ of God and believe in the Lamb of God as none other than "very God of very God" and have Him in high reverence whatever that reverence may involve. What though your inmost soul is awed with the deepest dread and made to tremble at the fate of those who reject the Savior and perish in their sins, yet seek not to save your feelings at your Savior's cost.

Moreover, what a conception of the love of God the gift of the Lord Jesus for our salvation gives us. Despite the terrible wrath of God against sin, He loved the sinner so much that He gave His only son to die for his redemption! Here is love! Let us infer from that gift His willingness to answer prayer. "He that spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things." Let us also see here sure proof of the security of the saints, for if Christ is the Lamb of God and no less than Divine, how shall they perish for whom such a Sacrifice was offered? If it is the blood of the Son of God which has bought us, we must be most effectually redeemed beyond all fear of perishing. So far you get doctrinal Truth from beholding the Lamb of God.

Now, if you desire experimental aid look to the Lamb of God, also. Is there a heart here troubled with sin? Do not meditate upon your sin hoping to find comfort from any consideration connected with it—as well look for Heaven in Hell! Do not look to your own resources for consolation—as well search the Arctic ocean for tropical heat! "Behold the Lamb of God!" Sin vanishes when the Savior appears. Are you tormented with the power of sin? Beloved, if you long to conquer sin within you, behold the Lamb of God! Crucified, your sin shall be upon that Cross where Jesus died. Contemplations of the Savior are the death of sin—no other weapon will destroy them.

If you suffer today from personal affliction and need fresh strength to bear it, "Behold the Lamb of God!" His way was much rougher and darker than yours—pluck up courage, He will bear you through it! He is familiar with all your griefs, His pitying eyes behold your sorrows. And oh, if you are getting weary in the battle of life and tired of serving God, "Behold the Lamb of God!" wrestling unto blood, and your courage will return! Reaper in the summer's heat, see Him as He grasps with that pierced hand the sickle! What strides He makes! How untiringly He labors till His bloody sweat falls on the ground. Up and do your reaping, too, working at His side!

Builder in the House of God, if you don't see the temple rising as you desire, do not lay down your trowel or the mallet, but see the MasterBuilder standing there with indefatigable perseverance following out His glorious design! Let not self-denial or self-sacrifice be difficult when the Lamb of God is before you. Let not perseverance be difficult, or shame, or scorn be hard to endure—or defeat, or death itself be impossible to triumph in—when the Lamb of God is before them! He conquered upon Golgotha, perhaps you will conquer there. Only keep your eye upon the Lamb of God and this will make you strong to do and to endure!

I might thus continue urging children of God to their profit to look to the Lamb of God, but I shall only add this, that if at any time we grow discouraged about God's work and are afraid that it will not succeed and so on, the very best encouragement for us is to Behold the Lamb of God! You are afraid that sin will conquer in your soul—how can it, when Jesus died for you? Sin seemed to win the day when Christ was dead, but He rose again and so shall you rise, and you shall be more than a conqueror!

And in this world is it not a very weary business to be a minister of Christ today? If I might have my choice I would sooner follow any avocation, so far as the comfort of it is concerned, than this of ministering to the sons of men! For we beat the air and this deaf generation will not hear us! What is this perverse generation the better for after years and years and years of preaching? This land is going back to the foul doctrines which its fathers would not bear—those who know better are in concert and continue in fellowship with the priests of Rome! The world is not worth preaching

to—we have piped unto it and it has not danced! We have mourned unto it, but it has not lamented! It needs an Elijah, a man of fire and thunder to deal with such an age as this!

But for all that, there is no room for discouragement, for the Truth of God will win the day! It is in the hands of One who cannot fail or falter. He shall not fail or be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth and the isles wait for His Law. The fight may seem to hang in the scales today, but the conquest is sure to come unto Him whose right it is. He shall gather all the scepters of kings beneath His arm in one mighty sheaf and take their diadems from off their brows, and be Himself crowned with many crowns, for God has said it, and Heaven and earth shall pass away but every promise of His must and shall be fulfilled!

Push on, then, through hosts of enemies, you warriors of the Cross! Fight up the hill, you soldiers of Christ, through the smoke and through the dust! You may not see your banner just now, neither do you hear the trumpet that rings out the note of victory, but the mist shall clear away and you shall gain the summit of the hill—and your foes shall fly before you, and the King Himself shall come and you shall be rewarded who have continued steadfast in His service.

IV. Now the last thought was to be this. Behold the Lamb of God WITH REVERENCE. I will not dwell upon it for I have not time. Lift up your eyes and worship Him now. He exists, He is as truly there in Heaven as He was here on earth. Behold Him! Worship Him! Trust Him! Love Him, for be this remembered, He will come before long and that which we shall have to dread if we are unbelievers will be the wrath of the Lamb!

Read through the book of Revelation and you shall find there, I think, more than 20 times the Lord described as a Lamb. The song is the "song of Moses and of the Lamb." Worship is given "unto the Lamb, for He is worthy." He it is that takes the book and looses the seven seals, and it is the Lamb that shall come "to judge the quick and the dead." "Therefore kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little." Worship Him at this hour for He comes before long! As the Lord lives before whom I stand, He will summon every one of you to His bar. Take heed that He is not an object of terror to you as He will be if you continue in unbelief, but turn unto Him that He may be your joy and gladness in the day of His appearing! Amen.

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Chapter 74

John 1,37-51 #570 - The First Five Disciples

THE FIRST FIVE DISCIPLES

NO. 570

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 15, 1864,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus.

Then Jesus turned and saw them following and said unto them, What do you seek? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say,

being interpreted, Master), where do You dwell? He said unto

them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt

and abode with Him that day for it was about the tenth

hour. One of the two which heard John speak and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah, (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the

son of Jona: you shall be called Cephas, (which is by interpretation,

A Stone). The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee and find

Philip and say unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida,

the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said

unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing

come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and

see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of

him, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no

guile. Nathanael said unto Him, Why do You

know me? Jesus answered and said unto him,

Before that Philip called you, when you were under

the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered and said

unto Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King

of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said

unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe?

You shall see greater things than these, And He

said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you,

Hereafter you shall see Heaven open and

the angels of God ascending and descending

upon the Son of Man."

John 1:37-51.

IF it is true that "Order is Heaven's first law," I think it must be equally

true that variety is the second law of Heaven. The line of beauty is not a straight line but always the curve. The way of God's procedure is not uniform but diversified. You see this with a glance, when you look at the creation around us. God has not made all creatures of one species but He has created beasts, birds, fishes, insects, reptiles. All flesh truly is not the same flesh, neither are all bodies of the same order. The dull dead earth, itself, is full of variety. Gems sparkle not all with the same ray. The grosser and less precious rocks are marked and veined. Each one according to its own fashion. In the vegetable world what a variety of plants, shrubs, herbs, flowers and trees we have about us! In any one of the kingdoms of Nature, whether it is the animal, vegetable, or mineral, you shall find so many subdivisions that it would need a long schooling to classify them and a lifetime would not suffice to understand them all.

Consider the winged creatures which flit through the air—what a diversity there is between the tiny humming bird, which seems to be but a living mass of gems, and the eagle which, with soaring wings ascends to the sky and sports with the lighting! The whole world is full of marvels and no two marvels alike. You shall never be able to find God repeating Himself. This great Master may often paint two pictures which seem alike, but investigated with the microscope, what differences at once are revealed!

Even those stars which seem to shine with rays of the same brilliance are discovered by the aid of the telescope to be of different colors, forms and orbits. No, even the very clouds are piled in varied forms and the masses of nebulae which make up the Milky Way are distinguishable from each other. God, in no instance that we can ever find, has used the same mold a second time. He is so affluent of designs, so abundant in the wisdom that devises, so prolific in plans that even when He would accomplish the same end He chooses to take another road to it. And that new road is quite as direct as those by which He has formerly reached His purpose.

Certainly this observation holds good in Providence. What strange diversity there has been in the dealings of God with His Church! When He has chastened His people He has scarcely ever made use of the same rod twice. At one time Midianites shall come up and devour the land of Israel. Another day the Philistines with their giants shall invade the country. Then shall come the Babylonians and the Assyrians. Later the Roman power shall tread Judea under foot. And as the rods of His chastisement have been always different on the great scale, so you have found it on the little scale.

God has seldom chastened you twice in the same way. You could trace diversities either in the manner of the blow or the instrument you were struck with, or in the part of your mind which seemed to be the most affected by His chastisements. In deliverers, again, how great a variety—you scarce find two alike! God raises up a Gideon, but Jephthah is not like Gideon and Samson is not like Jephthah, nor is David to be compared to Samson or Gideon. They are all diverse. And their weapons are varied, too. One man has to use an ass' jawbone, another must use a sling and a stone—one shall be content with the ox goad, while another must draw the dagger.

Different methods God ordains as well as different forms of man. And He delivers His people just according to His own will, but ever in a different form. Well may Providence be so diverse when you consider that men themselves whom God uses to be His principal instruments are so unlike each other. There are not merely the great differences of race and of nationality, nor even the differences of birth and education, but we are all different in constitution—no two minds being alike. There is an individuality about every one of us which will prevent our ever being mistaken for anyone else.

We might by accident be undistinguished, but let us be known and very soon important differences will be discovered. God is ever the God of variety and He will be so to the end of the chapter. He will do new things before He rolls up the book of history—we shall see new acts of the Lord—He will fight His battles after fresh methods, raise up deliverers different from any who have come before and will exalt and glorify His name upon new instruments of music. Let us expect it. He is the God of variety, both in Nature and in Providence.

My text is a very clear illustration that the same law applies in the work of Grace. There is ever the same kind of operation and yet ever a difference in the manner of operation. There is always the same Worker in the conversion of the soul and yet different methods for breaking the heart and binding it up again are continually employed. Every sinner must be quickened by the same life, made obedient to the same Gospel, washed in the same blood, clothed in the same righteousness, filled with the same Divine energy and eventually taken up to the same Heaven. And yet in the conversion of no two sinners will you find matters precisely the same.

From the first dawn of the Divine life to the day when it is consummated in the noontide of perfect sanctification in Heaven, you shall find that God works this way in that one, and that way in the other, and by another method in the third—for God still will be the God of variety. Let His order stand fast as it may, still will He ever be manifesting the variety, the many-sidedness of His thoughts and mind. If, then, you look at this narrative—somewhat long, but I think very full of instruction—you may notice four different methods of conversion. And these occur in the conversion of the first five who formed the nucleus of the college of Apostles— the first five who

came to Christ and were numbered among His disciples!

It is very remarkable that there should be among five individuals four different ways of conversion! Were you, however, to examine any five persons, I suppose you would find similar disparity. Pick out five Christians indiscriminately and begin to question them how they were brought to know the Lord. You will find methods other than those you have here. And probably quite as many as four out of the five would be distinct from the rest.

I. The first case we have in the text is THE CONVERSION OF THE TWO DISCIPLES. One was probably John. We cannot speak with absolute certainty, but it was very probably John. We know it to have been the habit of this Evangelist to omit his own name whenever he could. Sometimes he speaks of "that other disciple," when he means himself. And now and then he puts it, "that disciple whom Jesus loved."

His love nurtured in him a kindly esteem of others, but an humble estimate of himself. While, therefore, he never omits to record the need of praise others obtained from the lips of Christ, as often as he can he omits his own name. It is supposed then—and I think rightly—that one was John. The other was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. The first two disciples are the fruits of preaching.

May we not expect to find that the major part of our conversions are the result of the public ministry? "The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus." Let us offer a few words concerning this first matter. We expect, Beloved, to see a great number of souls brought to God by the preaching of the Truth of God. The preaching of the Cross may be and it actually is to those who perish, foolishness. But unto us who are saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Wherever there is the most Gospel preaching, you will find the most conversions.

Many of our societies for carrying the Gospel to the heathen forget their main work. And while setting up colleges, translating Bibles and publishing tracts, they neglect to use this great hammer of God, this mighty battering ram which is to dash down strongholds. The preaching of the Cross, the crying of, "Behold the Lamb of God!"—this is God's appointed agency. Other labors are to be entered into, but this is the main and chief agency for the conversion of souls.

Observe in the case before us, the preacher. He was a man Divinely illuminated. Jesus Christ came to John's Baptism, but at first the Baptist did not know Him. After awhile, however, when the descending Spirit marked out the Messiah, John then knew to a certainty that this was He of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write. Ever afterwards John's testimony was clear and bold. Though he ended his ministry with the loss of his head, he never lost the honesty of his purpose or the lucidness of his testimony. He continued faithfully to declare that the Messiah had come.

Brethren, it is of importance in the work of the ministry that the preacher be a God-illuminated man. Not that education is to be despised—on the contrary, we cannot expect the Spirit of God in these days to give to men the knowledge of languages if they can acquire that knowledge by a little perseverance. It is never the Divine rule to work a superfluous miracle. With the faculties and powers we possess, we must yield up our members unto God as instruments of righteousness. So far, then, as the education of the man is concerned, we believe God leaves that with us, for if we can do it there is no need that any miracle should be worked.

But let the man be educated ever so well, he is then but as the lump of clay—God must breathe into his nostrils the breath of spiritual life as a preacher, or else he will be of no service—just a dead weight upon the Church of God. What shall we say, then, of those men who enter into a pulpit because the family living is vacant, or because, indeed, being too great fools for either the army or the law, they must needs be put where their livelihood can be more easily obtained—in the Church? How crying is this sin in our times, that men should have Episcopal hands laid upon them, declaring that they are moved to the ministry by the Holy Spirit, when they know not whether there is a Holy Spirit, so far as any experimental knowledge of His power upon their own hearts is concerned!

The day, I hope, is passing away when men shall be more skilled at hunting the fox than at fishing for souls. And on the whole, God is raising up in this land a spirit of decision upon this point—that the Christian minister must be a man who knows experimentally in his own soul the Truths of God which he professes to preach. God may convert souls, it is true, by a bad preacher. Why, if the devil preached, I should not wonder at souls being converted—if only the devil preached the Truth. It is the Truth and not the preacher. Ravens, unclean birds though they are, brought Elijah his bread and his meat—and unclean ministers may sometimes bring God's servants their spiritual food. But for all that, unto the wicked, God says, "What have you to do to declare My statutes?" The minister must be a God-taught man whose eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit. This, at least, is the standing rule—whatever exceptions may be pleaded.

Then, mark you, granted that this is the case we must not expect his ministry to be alike successful at all times, for in the present instance, on one occasion the Baptist gave a very clear testimony for Christ, but none of his disciples left him to follow Jesus. The next time he preached he was successful, for two of his disciples joined the Master, though on the former occasion we read not that one of his hearers was led to declare himself on the Lord's side.

My Brethren, God suffers His ministers to cast the net sometimes on the wrong side of the ship. Even a whole night they may toil and take nothing. They may sow upon the barren ground, upon the highway and among the thorns. They may cast their bread upon the waters, and as yet they may not find it, for the promise speaks of "many days." Still the minister must persevere. If souls are not saved today, they may be tomorrow. I was wondering, as I read this passage, whether there were some who heard last Sunday in vain, who perhaps would hear to profit today. I was lifting up my heart in prayer to God that these words, "the next day after," might come true to some here.

Whereas, the other day, I cried, "Behold the Lamb!" and you did not see Him or trust Him, I will repeat the cry, "Behold the Lamb!" again today. O that you may be led to follow Jesus! When you have well considered the preacher and his success, I would have you observe his Subject. How short the sermon!—a rebuke to our prolixity. How plain it was—no difficult phrases—no high-flown elocutionary embellishments—no feats of oratory here! It is just, "Behold the Lamb!" But observe the Subject—John preaches of Jesus Christ, of nothing else but Christ. And of Christ, too, in that position and in that form in which He was most needed but least palatable.

The Jews accepted Christ the Lion. They looked for the mighty Hero of the Tribe of Judah who should break their bonds. Such Jesus was. But John did not preach Him as such. He preached Him as Christ the Lamb— the Lamb of God, the suffering, despised, meek, and patient Sacrifice.

The Baptist held Him up to the sons of men on this occasion as the great Sin Bearer. He seems to have brought out most prominently in his own thoughts and before the minds of the people the picture of the paschal lamb and of the scapegoat. He dwelt upon this, that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

If there are to be many conversions worked in any place, the preacher must be a man taught of God and he must persevere, even though he has been unsuccessful. But he must see to it that this is the staple of all his sermons, the raw material out of which he makes every discourse—"Jesus and Jesus the Lamb! Jesus the Sin Bearer." He must ever be crying, "You Sinners, see your sins laid on Him! You guilty, look to Him! Trust Him! There is life in a look at Him. He has taken your sins and carried your sorrows—look to Him!" Let the preacher stammer here and he is undone. Let him be unsound on the Atonement. Let him speak in feeble strains, as though he apologized for so old-fashioned a doctrine and you shall hear of no conversions from January to December.

But let him hold this to be the first and most important Truth—that Jesus Christ came into the world to be a Sin Bearer for sinners, even the chief, and there must be conversions! God were not true to His promise, the Truth were no longer the potent thing it has proved itself to be in the olden times if souls were not quickened and turned to God by such a ministry as this! O you who preach the Gospel, keep close to this, "Behold the Lamb of God!" You young men who stand up in the streets, make this your topic! And you who minister to the Church of God, give them all the doctrines of the Gospel, but still always come back to this as the needle comes to its pole—"Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world!"

In these two conversions by public ministry it is interesting to observe the process. Carefully notice the narrative. A spirit of enquiry was stirred up in Andrew and his companion and they began to follow Christ, not exactly as disciples as yet, but as searchers. If I may say so, they followed Christ's back. They had not come to see His face yet, or to sit at His feet. They followed His back as some do who, being impressed under the Word, have a desire after Christ and intend to set about an honest investigation of His claims to their faith. While they are following behind Christ, He turns round and faces them.

Oh, what a blessed turning for them! It was a blessed turning for Peter when the Lord turned and looked upon him! And in this case while they are, as it were, following His back, He turns and He looks upon them. I cannot tell you how much love there was in His eyes. The love of a mother to her first child may perhaps picture the love of Jesus Christ to these, His first disciples. He was God, He was Man, He was God's own Son. But He had never been a Master of disciples till that moment. Now He springs to a rank which He had not obtained before. Now He has some who will call Him "Rabbi," and will be willing to be guided by His teaching. He looks round upon them. Even so, when enquiry is excited by the ministry, and men begin to search, Jesus Christ looks upon them. With an eye of earnest affection He regards them and assists them in their search.

Jesus put to them the question, "What do you seek?"—a very modest question. Notice it. It is the first word of Christ's ministry. It is the first word I find Christ speaking at all in public—"What do you seek?" And was not it a very comprehensive question? "What is that you seek?" If there are any honest enquirers here after salvation, He puts the same question to you this morning—"What do you seek?" Are you seeking pardon? You shall find it in Me. Are you seeking peace? I will give you

rest. Are you seeking purity? I will take away your sin. A new heart will I give you and a right spirit will I put within you. What are you seeking? Some solid resting place for your soul upon earth and a glorious hope for yourself in Heaven? Whatever you seek, it is here.

What a text this might be for a missionary when first consulted by some of the awakened heathen, when he should say, "You are on the search after Truth. Now what is it you really want? What do you seek? What is it? Because whatever it is that the human heart in its right state can possibly seek after—all that is to be found in Christ." Christ meets the man who is in an enquiring frame of mind by suggesting to him further enquiry. He stirs up the heart. While the soul's fire is burning He puts fuel to the flame.

They say, "Master, where do you dwell?" And His answer to them is, "Come and see." This is just how the process of conversion is worked in men's hearts. They want to know more of Christ and He says to them, "Come and see." You would have peace—come and see whether I can give it to you. I tell you that if you trust Me, your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. "Come and see." You say you want purity—just try now the effect of the obedience of faith. See if it does not change your heart and renew your spirit. "Come and see." O you who are seeking and asking questions about Christ and about His Gospel and His Person and His pedigree, "Come and see."

The best way to be convinced of the potency of our holy Gospel is to try it for yourselves. If you are honest seekers, if the Grace of God has made you so, then come and test and try! "Blessed is every man that trusts in Him." This is our witness and our testimony. But if you want to be sure of it for yourselves, "Come and see." They took Christ at His word. They came and they saw. We are not told what they saw, but we are told what was the result—they stopped with Him that night and they remained with Him all His days and became His faithful disciples.

O my dear Friend, if you would but come and see Christ! If by humble earnest prayer you would give your heart up to Him and then trust in Him implicitly to be your Guide, you would never lament the decision! If Jesus proves a liar to you, then desert Him! If His promises are not true, then stand no longer numbered with His disciples. But give Him a trial—

"O make but trial of His love! Experience will decide how blest are they and only they, Who in His Truth confide."

You see, then, the way in which God's Grace works through the Word—it excites a spirit of enquiry, then a still further enquiry, then the test of experience—and afterwards leads to the giving up of the heart to Christ.

II. The next case is a very different one. The third of Christ's disciples, one Simon Peter, was brought in by PRIVATE INSTRUMENTALITY and not by the public preaching of the Word. Observe the forty-first verse, "Andrew first finds his own brother Simon, and says unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." This case is but the pattern of all cases where spiritual life is vigorous. As soon as ever a man is found by Christ, he begins to find others.

The word "first" implies that he did not give it up afterwards—he first found his own brother Simon! How many he found afterwards I cannot tell, but I will be bound to say that Andrew continued to be

a fisher of men till he was taken up to the third Heaven. He found very many after he had found Peter. The first instinct of the new-born life is to desire the good of others. I will not believe that you have tasted of the honey of the Gospel if you can eat it all yourself. True Grace puts an end to all spiritual monopoly.

I know there are some who think there is no Grace beyond their own Chapel. They believe that God never works beyond the walls of their own tabernacle. Beyond the range of the voice of their minister everything is unsound, unorthodox, pretensions perhaps, but still fatally delusive. They hold that all others are out of the bond of the Covenant and, not unlike those ancient wranglers in the land of Uz, they say, "We are the men and wisdom will die with us." Surely God's people never talk in that fashion, or if they do, they are then speaking the language of Ashdod and not the speech of the child of Israel, for the Israelite's tongue drops with love and his speech is full of the anxious desire that others may be brought in!

Look at our Apostle Paul. You shall never find stronger predestinarianism than you read in the ninth chapter of Romans, and yet what does he say? His heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. He had heaviness of heart, he says, for his Brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. There was no man more anxious to convert souls than Paul, though there was no man more sound in the doctrine of the election of God. He knew it was not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but yet he could say as Samuel did, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

See, then, that the first desire of a Christian man is to endeavor to bring others to the Savior. Relationship has a very stern demand upon our first individual efforts. Andrew, you did well to begin with Simon. I do not know, my Brethren, whether there are not some Christians giving away tracts at other people's houses who would do well to give away a tract at their own. I wonder whether there are not some going out to the villages preaching who had better remain at home teaching their own children—or whether even in the Sunday school there may not be those who come before God to perform one duty, while their hands are stained blood-red with the murder of another duty. Your first business is at home. You may have a call to teach other people's children—that may be—but certainly you have an imperative call to teach your own. You may or you may not be called to look after the people of a neighboring town or village, but certainly you are called to see after your own servants, your own kinsfolk and acquaintances. Let your religion begin at home.

We have heard of some people who export their best commodities— many traders do—I do not think the Christian should imitate them in that. At least let the Christian have all his conversation everywhere of the best savor, but let him have a care to put forth the sweetest fruit of spiritual life and testimony at home and in the circle of his own kinsfolk and acquaintances. Andrew, you did well, first, to find your brother Simon. When he went to find him he may not have thought of what Simon would become. Why, Simon was worth ten Andrews, as far as we can gather from the Evangelists! Peter was a very prince among the Apostles! And with that ready tongue of his and that bold, dashing, daring spirit—with that confident, resolute soul—there were none of them a match for Peter!

John might excel in love, but still Peter was verily a leader among the Apostles, and Andrew would but little compare with him. You may be yourself but very deficient in talent and yet you may be the

means of bringing a great man to Christ. Ah, dear Friend, you little know the possibilities which are in you! You may but speak a word to a child and in that child there may be slumbering now a great heart which shall stir the Christian Church in years to come. Andrew has only two talents, but then finds Peter. Andrew's testimony to Peter is worthy of remark. There was great modesty in it and that, I dare say, commended it to Peter.

He did not say, "I have found the Messiah"—he says, "We." Whoever was the other disciple, he gives him his share of the discovery. Our speech never loses force by losing pride but generally increases its power in proportion to its modesty, though that modesty must never interfere with boldness. His testimony was very plain and very positive. He did not beat around the bush or hesitate, but it is just this—"We have found the Messiah." Plain and unadorned was the statement, very positive. He did not say, "I think we have," or, "I trust we have," but, "we have." And this was just the thing for Simon Peter.

Peter wanted positive and plain dealing and he was a man who wanted it pushed home by a brother's friendly voice, or else it had little availed him to speak of Christ at all. When he was brought to Jesus, observe the process of conversion. Jesus describes to him his present state. He said, "You are Simon, son of Jona." Some interpret this, "You are Simon, the son of the timid dove." He explains to him what he was—shows that He knew him—that He understood both his boldness and his cowardice— both his rashness and his constancy. And then, when He had told him what he was, Jesus gave him a new name indicative of the nature which His Grace would give—"You shall be called Cephas, a stone."

Now this is the general plan of conversion. It is the plan in every case, really, though not apparently. Nature is discovered and Grace is imparted. The old name we are taught to read with sorrow and a new name is given to us and we rejoice in it. There may be some here who have not been converted to God under the ministry but under the words of a Sunday school teacher, or a sister, or a friend. Thank God and take courage. It does not matter how you are converted, so long as you are resting upon Jesus only!

If you have not been a searcher of the Word, if Christ has never seemed to say to you, "Come and see," yet if your nature has been changed and you have received a new name—if there is a radical change in the rest— you are a child of God. That you are brought into the fellowship of the saints is an illustration of the unity of God's purpose. That there should be distinctive marks in your conversion is quite in harmony with the diversity of His operations.

III. "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee and find Philip and say unto him, Follow Me." The fourth disciple is called without either the public Word or private instruction—he is called directly BY THE VOICE OF JESUS. Now in truth all men are so called, for the voice of John or the voice of Andrew is really the voice of Jesus Christ speaking through their instrumentality. But in some cases no apparent instrumentality is used. We have known some who on a sudden have felt impressions, from where they came or where they tended they did not know.

In the midst of business we have known the workman suddenly check his plane—a great thought has entered into his brain—where it came from he could not tell. We have known a man wake up at midnight—he could not tell why, but a holy calm was upon him and as the moon was shining through the window there seemed to be a holy light shining into his soul and he began to think. We

have known such things to occur—surprising cases—when men have been planning deeds of vice.

Was it not so with Colonel Gardner—that very night about to perpetrate a crime and yet stopped by Sovereign Grace upon the very brink of it, without any apparent instrumentality? We can not tell, Brethren, when God may regenerate His elect, for though we are to use means and cry to God to send forth laborers into the vineyard, yet the Sovereign Lord of All will frequently work without them. The Word which has been heard in years gone by. The Scripture which was known in childhood may, by the direct power of the Holy Spirit, without any immediate apparent means, turn the man from darkness to Light. Jesus Christ spoke but two words, but those words were enough—"Follow Me"—and Philip at once obeyed. What preparation of heart there had been before, I cannot tell. What still small voice had been speaking before this in Philip's ear, we do not know. Certainly the only outward means was this voice of Christ, "Follow Me." And there may be in this House some who will be converted this morning. You do not know why you are here. You cannot tell why you strayed in. But yet it may be—God knows—Christ would have you come here because He would come here Himself. Is not there something which invites a pause in that word, "would," as we read it in this verse?—"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee." Is not there something of the Divine necessity which we have often noticed in another place?—"He must needs go through Samaria." Did not He feel instinctively that there was a soul there which He must meet with and He must go after it and speak the all-commanding, sin-subduing Word?

Perhaps this morning Jesus would come to the Tabernacle! Jesus would come here because He knows that Philip is come here, too. Philip, where are you? You may have lived in sin and despised Christ, but if He says, "Follow Me," I beseech you obey His word and follow Him! To follow Christ is the picture of Christian discipleship in every form. Follow Christ in your doctrines—believe what He teaches! Follow Christ in your faith— trust Him implicitly with your soul! Follow Him in your actions—let Him be your example and Guide! Follow Him in ordinances—in Baptism follow Him and at His Table follow Him!

To every deed of daring, to every place of spiritual communion, to the mountain of secret prayer, or to the crowd in open ministry, follow Him! According to your measure tread in the footsteps of your Lord and Master. And this, I say, may be directed to one who has had no other instrumentality used upon him, but just the mysterious voice of Christ— "Follow Me." It was so with the third case. Perhaps of the three this experience is the highest. The first two were told, "Come and see," and they came to understand the value of Christ. But this one is made to follow—he carries out practically that which the others did but see.

The second conversion before us attains a higher degree than the first. But this is the highest of all when the change of nature, as in the case of Peter, now leads to a change of action, as in the case of Philip, who arises and follows Christ.

IV. I hope I have not wearied you, for there is yet the fourth case of the fifth disciple, which differs from them all—Nathanael. What shall we say of Nathanael? Was he converted by ministry? It does not appear so. Was he converted by PRIVATE INSTRUMENTALITY? He was partly so. Philip finds Nathanael, but Philip's finding of Nathanael was not quite so effectual as Christ's finding of Philip. When Christ found Philip, Philip believed. But when Philip found Nathanael, Nathanael would not believe. He said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Philip is partly the instrument, but there is something more. Jesus Christ Himself shows His own power BY TELLING TO NATHANAEL THE SECRETS OF HIS HEART. But still, Nathanael's conversion to Christ seems to me to be PARTLY OWING TO THE STATE IN WHICH HE THEN WAS. He was already in some sense a saved man—he was a devout Israelite. He was a true seeker of the Messiah beneath the fig tree. Well, then, there were these things put together—there was a preparation of heart which was doubtless worked of God.

But this preparation did not bring him to Christ, though it made him ready for Christ. It brought him to God in prayer, but it did not bring him yet to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Then came Philip's instrumentality and then came Christ's Divine Word which convinced Nathanael and led him to put his trust in the Messiah. This is a sort of composite case and doubtless there are many in the Church of God, who, if you should ask them, "How were you converted?" would be somewhat puzzled to give the answer.

We find in our Church Meetings a very large proportion of people who say, "Well, I cannot trace my conversion to any one sermon—many sermons have impressed me—indeed, most do. I cannot say, Sir, that I was converted when I was a child, but I sometimes think I was, for even at that time I was the subject of many impressions and I certainly did offer prayer. Yet there was a time," they will tell you, "there was a time when I seemed to come out more distinctly into the Light. And when I could say of Christ, 'You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel,' but I cannot say exactly when the sun rose."

Now this, I think, was Nathaniel's case. Perhaps trained and brought up by godly parents, he had been in the habit of prayer—that prayer was somewhat ignorant—but it was very sincere. He sought the solitude of his shady garden and under the fig tree poured out his heart unto the Lord. That man is not saved. No! But there is a great part of the work done. Do not tell me that that man in his prayer has nothing in him more than the blasphemer. I tell you that he needs as much as the blasphemer does to have an effectual Word from Christ, but still there is a preparatory work in this man which there is not even in Philip, or in Simon Peter. There is a something, not meritorious, but still preparatory to the reception of the Gospel of Christ.

And when you labor for the conversion of such a man as this—and I do hope there may be some in this crowd—then it does not matter whether it is the ministry, or whether it is private instrumentality—there is sure to be good result because there is good ground to begin with. God has already furrowed and plowed the soil and so when the seed is scattered, there may be a little objection at first, but ultimately it will take root. Be looking out then, dear Friends, you who know how to talk to others about their souls! And wherever you see anything like devotion, even if it is mistaken and ignorant, look at that case! Be especially hopeful about it and try, if you can, to inform that person, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write."

Introduce Christ, talk of Jesus, bring these Nathanaels to Jesus—these who are like the honest and good ground, these men without guile or cunning—bring them to Jesus! Still, mark you, their prayers and your instrumentality will not be enough unless Christ shall meet them with some startling, soul-discovering Word and shall say, "Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Ah, you seeking Soul, Christ sees you! Before you came here this morning Jesus saw you! Before you hear the challenge, "Look to Christ," Christ has looked upon you. If you are truly seeking in the loneliness of that upper room, or in that field behind the hedge, Jesus sees

you!

When you are by the wayside and your heart is going up, "Lord, save me, or I perish," Jesus sees you! One of you has been writing to me this morning, and you say, "Pray for me that I may be saved, for I want to be saved." Ah, my Friend, if you want to be saved, Jesus wants to save you and so you are both agreed on that point! You, like Nathanael, are seeking Him. And I come this morning, like Philip and I long to bring you to Jesus, my Master. Oh, how I pray Him to speak to you and if so, He will tell you that He knew you when you were dead in sin and loved you, notwithstanding all!

And therefore He brought you to this House to hear His Word. Mark you, Nathanael's is the best case of the whole! He was favored above many. Who was the first man that ever had a promise from Christ? It was Nathanael! What was that? Why, that promise seems to me to be the sum of the Gospel—or rather the token-promise of the Gospel—which every Christian should carry in his hand. Jesus said, "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, believe you? You shall see greater things than these." Nathanael was the first man who ever received a promise from the lips of the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth!

O you seeking Nathanaels, I think this is a promise for you—"You shall see greater things than these"—you shall see yourself pardoned! You shall see your prayers ascending Jacob's ladder and blessings coming down from God to rest upon your soul! I had hoped to have brought out many more points, but indeed, the chapter is too full for any to handle in so brief a time. You will observe, however, that I have given you just a glance at the surface of it which will suffice to show that the means of conversion and the general tenor of conversion will be found to differ in each case. Perhaps Nathanael's is the highest of all—he receives Christ in a fuller way than any of the others and he enjoys greater promises than they do.

But still they are all genuine, though they are not one of them like the other, except that John and Andrew may be put together. Judge not, therefore, your conversion by its means or by its particular form, but judge it by its fruit. Does it bring you to Jesus? Are you depending upon Him now? If so, go your way—your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! Eat the fat and drink the sweet, for God accepts you—therefore rejoice! But and if you have had a thousand conversions, if you are not resting on Jesus this morning, tremble, for your refuge is a refuge of lies! Your hope is a spider's web—God deliver you from it and bring you now to rest upon the finished work and the perfect Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus! And then, with Andrew and Peter and John, and Philip and Nathanael you shall meet before the Throne to praise Him who is the Son of God and the King of Israel! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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

John 1,42 #855 - Everyday Usefulness

EVERYDAY USEFULNESS

NO. 855

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 14, 1869,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he brought him to Jesus."

John 1:42.

WE have a most intense desire for the revival of religion in our own

midst and throughout all the Churches of our Lord Jesus. We see that error is making great advances and we would gladly lift up a banner for the cause of the Truth of God. We pity the mighty populations among whom we dwell for they are still godless and Christless and the things of their peace are hidden from their eyes. Therefore we would gladly behold the Lord performing miracles of Divine Grace. Our hope is that the set time to favor Zion is come and we intend to be importunate in prayer that God will reveal His arm and do great things in these latter days.

Our eager desire, of which our special services will be the expression, is a right one. Challenge it who will, it is ours to cultivate and prove by our zeal for God that the desire is not insincere or superficial. But, my Brothers and Sisters, it is very possible that in addition to cultivating a vehement desire for the revival of religion, we may have been daydreaming and forecasting in our minds a conception of the form which the Divine visitation shall take. Remembering what we have heard of former times of refreshing, you expect a repetition of the same outward signs and look for the Lord to work as He did with Livingstone at the Kirk of Shotts, or with Jonathan Edwards in New England, or Whitefield in our own land.

Perhaps you have planned in your mind that God will raise up an extraordinary preacher whose ministry will attract the multitude, and while he is preaching, God the Holy Spirit will attend the Word so that hundreds will be converted under every sermon and other evangelists will be raised up of a like spirit and from end to end this island shall hear the Truth and feel its power. Now it may be that God will so visit us. It may be that such signs and wonders as have frequently attended revivals may be again witnessed—the Lord may rend the heavens and come out and make the mountains to fall down at His feet!

But it is just possible that He may select quite another method. His Holy Spirit may reveal Himself like a mighty river swollen with floods and sweeping all before its majestic current. But if He so wills, He may rather unveil His power as the gentle dew which, without observation, refreshes all the earth! It may happen unto us as unto Elijah when the fire and the wind passed before him, but

the Lord was not in either of those mighty agencies—He preferred to commune with His servant in a still, small voice. Perhaps that still, small voice is to be language of Divine Grace in this congregation. It will be useless, then, for us to be mapping out the way of the eternal God! It will be idle for us to be rejecting all the good which He may be pleased to give us because it does not happen to come in the shape which we have settled in our own minds to be the proper one. Idle, did I say? Such prejudice would be wicked to the extreme! It has very frequently happened that while men have been sketching out imaginary designs they have missed actual opportunities! They would not build because they could not erect a palace—they therefore shiver in the winter's cold. They would not be clothed in homespun, for they looked for scarlet and fine linen—and before long they were not content to do a little and therefore did nothing! I want, therefore, to say, this morning, to every Believer here, it is vain for us to be praying for an extensive revival of religion and comforting each other in the hope of it, if, meanwhile, we allow our zeal to effervesce and sparkle—and then to be dissipated.

Our proper plan is, with the highest expectations and with the greatest longings, to imitate the woman of whom it is written, "She has done what she could," by laboring diligently in such holy works as may be within our reach, according to Solomon's precept, "Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might." While Believers are zealously doing what God enables them to do, they are in the high road to abundant success. But if they stand all the day idle, grasping after wonders, their spiritual need shall come upon them as an armed man. I have selected the text before us in order that I may speak upon matters which are practical and efforts within the reach of all. We shall not speak of the universal triumph of the Gospel, but of its victory in single hearts. Nor shall we deal with the efforts of an entire Church, but with the pious fervor of individual disciples.

If the Christian Church were in a proper and healthy state, the members would be studious of the Word of God and would themselves have so much of the Spirit of Christ that the only thing they would need in the great assemblies, over and above worship, would be a short encouraging and animating word of direction addressed to them, as to well-drilled and enthusiastic soldiers who need but the word of command and the deed of valor is straightway performed. So would I speak and so would I have you hear at this hour.

Coming then, to the subject. Andrew was converted by Christ to become His disciple. Immediately he sets to work to recruit the little army by discipling others. He finds his brother, Peter, and he brings him to Jesus.

I. First, I shall call your attention, this morning, to THE MISSIONARY DISCIPLE. Andrew is the picture of what all disciples of Christ should be! To begin, then. This first successful Christian missionary was himself a sincere follower of Jesus. Is it necessary to make that observation? No, rather, will it ever be needless while so many make a profession of a faith which they do not possess? While so many will wantonly thrust themselves into the offices of Christ's Church, having no concern for the Glory of His kingdom and no part or lot in it, it will always be necessary to repeat that warning, "Unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes?"

Men who have never seen the beauties of Emmanuel are not fit persons to describe them to others. An experimental acquaintance with vital godliness is the first necessity for a useful worker for Jesus. That preacher is accursed who knows not Christ for himself! God may, in infinite sovereignty, make him the means of blessing to others, but every moment that he tarries in the

pulpit he is an impostor! Every time he preaches he is a mocker of God and woe unto him when his Master calls him to his dread account! You unconverted young people who enter upon the work of Sunday school instruction and so undertake to teach others what you do not know yourselves, place yourselves in a position of unusual solemnity and of extraordinary peril! I say, "of extraordinary peril," because you do, by the fact of being a teacher, profess to know and will be judged by your profession—and, I fear, condemned out of your own mouths!

You know only the theory of religion and of what use is that while you are strangers to its power? How can you lead others along a way which you yourself refuse to tread? Besides, I have noticed that persons who become active in Church work before they have first believed in Christ are very apt to remain without faith, resting content with the general repute which they have gained. O dear Friends, beware of this! In this day hypocrisy is so common and self-deceit is so easy that I would not have you place yourselves where those vices become almost inevitable. If a man voluntarily puts himself where it is taken for granted that he is godly, his next step will be to mimic godliness and by-and-by he will flatter himself into the belief that he really possesses that which he so successfully imitates.

Beware, dear Hearers, of a religion which is not true—it is worse than none! Beware of a form of godliness which is not supported by the fervor of your heart and soul. This age of shams presents but few instances to self-examination, therefore am I the more earnest that every one of us, before he shall seek to bring others to Christ, should deliberately ask himself, "Am I a follower of Christ myself? Am I washed in His blood? Am I renewed by His Spirit?" If not, my first business is not in the pulpit, but on my knees in prayer! My first occupation should not be in the Sunday school class, but in my closet, confessing my sin and seeking pardon through the atoning Sacrifice!

Andrew was earnest for the souls of others, though he was but a young convert. So far as I can gather, he appears to have beheld Jesus as the Lamb of God one day and to have sought after his brother, Peter, the next. Far be it from us to forbid you who but yesterday found joy and peace, to exert your new-born zeal and youthful ardor! No, my Brothers and Sisters, delay not, but make haste to spread abroad the Good News which is now so fresh and so full of joy to you! It is right that the advanced and the experienced should be left to deal with the captious and the skeptical, but you, even you, young as you are, may find some with whom you can cope—some brother like Simon Peter, some sister dear to you who will listen to your unvarnished tale and believe in your simple testimony. Though you are but young in Divine Grace and but little instructed, begin the work of soul-winning, and—

"Tell to sinners round What a dear Savior you have found!"

If the religion of Jesus Christ consisted in abstruse doctrines, hard to be understood. If the saving Truths of Christianity were metaphysical points, difficult to handle—then a matured judgment would be needed in every worker for God and it would be prudent to say to the young convert, "Hold back till you are instructed." But, since that which saves souls is as simple as A, B, C. Since it is nothing but this, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved," he that trusts the merits of Christ shall be saved! You who have trusted Him know that He saved you and you know that He will save others! And I charge you before God, tell it, tell it right and left, but especially tell it to your own kinsfolk and acquaintances that they, also, may find eternal life!

Andrew was a disciple, a new disciple and I may add, a commonplace disciple, a man of average capacity. He was not at all the brilliant character that Simon Peter, his brother, turned out to be. Throughout the life of Jesus Christ Andrew's name occurs, but no notable incident is connected with it. Though in later life he, no doubt, became a most useful Apostle, and according to tradition, sealed his life's ministry by death upon a cross, yet at the first Andrew was, as to talent, an ordinary Believer—one of that common standard and nothing remarkable. Yet Andrew became a useful minister and thus it is clear that servants of Jesus Christ are not to excuse themselves from endeavoring to extend the boundaries of His kingdom by saying, "I have no remarkable talent, or singular ability."

I very much disagree with those who decry ministers of slender gifts, sneering at them, as though they ought not to occupy the pulpit at all. Are we, after all, Brethren, as servants of God, to be measured by mere oratorical ability? Is this after the fashion of Paul, when he renounced the wisdom of words lest the faith of the disciples should stand in the wisdom of man and not in the power of God? If you could blot out from the Christian Church all the minor stars and leave nothing but those of the first magnitude, the darkness of this poor world would be increased sevenfold! How often the eminent preachers, which are the Church's delight, are brought into the Church by those of less degree, even as Simon Peter was converted by Andrew!

Who shall tell what might have become of Simon Peter if it had not been for Andrew? Who shall say that the Church would ever have possessed a Peter if she had closed the mouth of Andrew? And who shall put their finger upon the brother or sister of inferior talent and say, "These must hold their peace"? No, Brother, if you have but one talent, the more zealously use it! God will require it of you—let not your Brethren hold you back from putting it out to interest. If you are but as a glowworm's, lamp, hide not your light, for there is an eye predestinated to see by your light, a heart ordained to find comfort by your faint gleam. Shine, and may the Lord accept you!

I am saying all this in this way that I may come to the conclusion that every single professor of the faith of Christ is bound to do something for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. I would that all the members of this Church, whatever their talents were, would be like Andrew in promptness. He is no sooner a convert than he is a missionary! He is no sooner taught than he begins to teach! I would have them like Andrew, persevering, as well as prompt. He first finds Peter—that is his first success—but how many afterwards he found, who shall tell? Throughout a long life of usefulness it is probable that Andrew brought many stray sheep to the Redeemer's fold, yet certainly that first one would be among the dearest to his heart.

"He first finds Peter"—he was the spiritual father of many sons, but he rejoiced most that he was the father of his own brother Peter—his brother in the flesh, but his son in Christ Jesus! Could it be possible for me to come to every one of you personally and grasp you by the hand, I would with most affectionate earnestness—yes, even with tears—pray that you, by Him to whom you owe your souls, would awake and render personal service to the Lover of your souls! Make no excuse, for no excuse can be valid from those who are bought with so great a price! Your business, you will tell me, requires so much of your thoughts—I know it does—then use your business in such a way as to serve God in it.

Still there must be some scraps of time which you could devote to holy service. There must be some opportunities for directly aiming at conversions. I charge you to avail yourselves of such

occasions lest they be laid to your door. To some of you the excuse of "business" would not apply, for you have seasons of leisure. Oh, I beseech you, let not that leisure be driveled away in frivolities, in mere talk, in sleep and self-indulgence! Let not time slip away in vain persuasions that you can do nothing, but now, like Andrew, hasten at once to serve Jesus! If you can reach but one individual, let him not remain unsought. Time is hastening and men are perishing! The world is growing old in sin! Superstition and idolatry root themselves into the very soil of human nature!

When, when will the Church become intent upon putting down her Master's foes? Possessing such little strength, we cannot afford to waste a jot of it. With such awful demands upon us we cannot afford to trifle. O that I had the power to stir the heart and soul of all my fellow Christians by a description of this huge city wallowing in iniquity—by a picture of the graveyards and cemeteries fattening on innumerable corpses—by a portrayal of that lake of fire to which multitudes yearly descend! Surely sin, the grave, and Hell are themes which might create a tingling even in the dull cold ear of Death! O that I could set before you the Redeemer upon the Cross dying to ransom souls! O that I could depict the Heaven which sinners lose and their remorse when they shall find themselves excluded!

I wish I could even set before you in vivid light the cases of your own sons and daughters, the spiritual condition of your own brothers and sisters without Christ and therefore without hope! Unrenewed and therefore "heirs of wrath even as others"! Then might I expect to move each Believer here to an immediate effort to pluck men as brands from the burning.

II. Having described the missionary disciple, we shall now speak briefly in the second place upon a GREAT OBJECT. The great object of Andrew seems to have been to bring Peter to Jesus. This, too, should be the aim of every renewed heart—to bring our friends to Jesus—not to convert them to a party. There are certain unbrotherly sectarians, called "Brethren," who compass sea and trod land to make proselytes from other Christian Churches. These are not merchants seeking goodly pearls in a legitimate fashion, but pirates who live by plunder. They must not excite our wrath so much as our pity, though it is difficult not to mingle with it something of disgust.

While this world remains as wicked as it is, we need not be spending our strength as Christian denominations in attacking one another—it will be better for us to go and fight with the Canaanites than with rival tribes which should be one united Israel! I should reckon it to be a burning disgrace if it could be said, "The large Church under that man's pastoral care is composed of members whom he has stolen away from other Christian Churches." No, but I value beyond all price the godless, the careless who are brought out from the world into communion with Christ! These are true prizes—not stealthily removed from friendly shores—but captured at the edge of the sword from an enemy's dominions! We welcome Brethren from other Churches if, in the Providence of God they are drifted to our shores, but we would never hang out the wrecker's beacon to dash other Churches in pieces in order to enrich ourselves with the wreck! Far rather would we be looking after perishing souls than cajoling unstable ones from their present place of worship. To recruit one regiment from another is no real strengthening of the army—to bring in fresh men should be the aim of all. Furthermore, the object of the soul-winner is not to bring men to a merely outward religiousness. Little will you have done for a man if you merely make the Sabbath-breaker into a Sabbathkeeper and leave him a self-righteous Pharisee. Little will you have done for him if you persuade him, having been prayerless, to be a mere user of a form of prayer, his heart not

being in it.

You do but change the form of sin in which the man lives—you prevent him being drowned in the salt water, but you throw him into the fresh. You take one poison from him, but you expose him to another. The fact is, if you would do real service to Christ, your prayer and your zeal must follow the person who has become the object of your attention till you bring him absolutely to close with Divine Grace and lay hold on Jesus Christ and accept eternal life as it is found in the atoning Sacrifice! Anything short of this may have its usefulness for this world, but must be useless for the world to come. To bring men to Jesus—O, be this your aim and desire!—not to bring them to Baptism, nor to the Meeting House, nor to adopt our form of worship, but to bring them to His dear feet who alone can say, "Go in peace. Your sins which are many are all forgiven you."

Brothers and Sisters, as we believe Jesus to be the very center of the Christian religion, he who gets not to Christ gets not to true godliness at all. Some are quite satisfied if they get to the priest and obtain his absolution. They are fine if they get the "sacraments" and eat bread in the church—if they get to prayers and pass through a religious routine—but we know that all this is less than nothing and vanity unless the heart draws near to Jesus. Unless the soul accepts Jesus as God's appointed Sin-Offering and rests alone in Him, it walks in a vain show and disquiets itself in vain. Come then, Brethren, nerve yourselves to this point, that from this day forth let your one ambition be in dealing with your fellow men, to bring them to Jesus Christ Himself! Be it determined in your spirit that you will never cease to labor for them till you have reason to believe that they are trusting in Jesus, loving Jesus, serving Jesus and united to Jesus in the hope that they shall be conformed to the image of Jesus and dwell with Him, world without end.

But some will say, "We can very clearly understand how Andrew brought Peter to the Lord, because Jesus was here among men and they could walk together till they found Him." Yes, but Jesus is not dead and it is a mistake to suppose that He is not readily to be reached. Prayer is a messenger that can find Jesus at any hour. Jesus is gone up on high as to His body, but His spiritual Presence remains with us. And the Holy Spirit, as the Head of this dispensation, is always near at hand to every Believer. Intercede, then, for your friends! Plead with Christ on their account! Mention their names in your constant prayers! Set apart special times in which you plead with God for them. Let your dear sister's case ring in the ears of the Mediator. Let your dear child's name be repeated again and again in your intercessions. As Abraham pleaded for Ishmael, so let your cry come up for those who are round about you, that the Lord would be pleased to visit them in His mercy. Intercession is a true bringing of souls to Christ and this means will prevail when you are shut out from employing any other. If your dear ones are in Australia, in some settler's hut where even a letter cannot reach them, prayer can find them out! No ocean can be too wide for prayer to span, no distance too great for prayer to travel. Far off as they are, you can take them up in the arms of believing prayer and bear them to Jesus and say, "Master, have mercy upon them." Here is a valuable weapon for those who cannot preach or teach—they can wield the sword of all-prayer. When hearts are too hard for sermons and good advice is rejected, it still remains to love to be allowed to plead with God for its wayward one. Tears and weeping are prevalent at the Mercy Seat and if we prevail there, the Lord will be sure to manifest His prevailing Grace in obdurate spirits.

To bring men to Jesus you can adopt the next means, with most of them, namely, that of instructing them, or putting them in the way of being informed concerning the Gospel. It is a very wonderful thing that while, to us, the light of the Gospel is so abundant, it should be so very partially distributed in this country. When I have expounded my own hope in Christ to two or three in a railway carriage, I have found myself telling my listeners perfect novelties! I have seen the look of astonishment upon the face of many an intelligent Englishman when I have explained the doctrine of the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ. I have even met with persons who have attended their parish Church from their youth up who were totally ignorant of the simple truth of justification by faith!

Yes, and I have known some who have been to dissenting places of worship who do not seem to have laid hold of the fundamental Truth of God that no man is saved by his own doings, but that salvation is procured by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. This nation is steeped up to the throat in self-righteous doctrine, and the Protestantism of Martin Luther is very generally unknown. The Truth is held by as many as God's Grace has called, but the great outlying world still talk of doing your best and then hoping in God's mercy—of legal self-confidence, and I know not what beside—while the master doctrine that he who believes in Jesus is saved by Jesus' finished work, is sneered at as enthusiasm, or attacked as leading to licentiousness.

Proclaim it, then! Proclaim it on all sides! Take care that none under your influence shall be left in ignorance of it! I can bear personal witness that the statement of the Gospel has often proved, in God's hand, enough to lead a soul into immediate peace. Not many months ago I met with a lady holding sentiments of almost undiluted popery and in conversing with her I was delighted to see how interesting and attractive a thing the Gospel was to her. She complained that she enjoyed no peace of mind as the result of her religion and never seemed to have done enough. She had a high idea of priestly absolution, but it had evidently been quite unable to yield repose to her spirit. Death was feared. God was terrible—even Christ an object of awe rather than love.

When I told her that whoever believes on Jesus is perfectly forgiven and that I knew I was forgiven—that I was as sure of it as of my own existence—that I feared neither to live nor to die, for it would be the same to me, because God had given me eternal life in His Son—I saw that a new set of thoughts were astonishing her mind! She said, "If I could believe that, I should be the happiest person in the world." I did not deny the inference, but claimed to have proved its truth and I have reason to believe that the little simple talk we had has not been forgotten. You cannot tell how many may be in bondage for lack of the simplest possible instruction upon the plainest Truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Many, too, may be brought to Christ through your example. Believe me, there is no preaching in this world like the preaching of a holy life! It shames me, sometimes, and weakens me in my testimony for my Master, when I stand here and recollect that some professors of religion are a disgrace not only to their religion, but even to common morality. It makes me feel as though I must speak with bated breath and trembling knees when I remember the damnable hypocrisy of those who thrust themselves into the Church of God and by their abominable sins bring disgrace upon the cause of God and eternal destruction upon themselves!

In proportion as a Church is holy, in that proportion will its testimony for Christ be powerful. Oh, were the saints immaculate, our testimony would be like fire among the stubble! Like the flaming

firebrand in the midst of the sheaves of corn! Were the saints of God less like the world, more disinterested, more prayerful, more godlike, the tramp of the armies of Zion would shake the nations and the day of the victory of Christ would surely dawn! Freely might the Church barter her most golden-mouthed preacher if she received in exchange men of Apostolic life! I would be content that the pulpit should be empty if all the members of the Church would preach Jesus by their patience in suffering, by their endurance in temptation, by exhibiting in the household those Graces which adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Oh, so live, I pray you, in God's fear and by the Spirit's power, that they who see you may ask, "From where has this man this holiness?" and may follow you till they are led by you to Jesus Christ to learn the secret by which men live unto God! You can bring men to Jesus by your example, then. And once again, let me say, before I close this point, our object should be to bring men to Jesus—having tried intercession and instruction and example—by occasionally, as time and opportunity may serve us, giving a word of importunate entreaty. Half-a-dozen words from a tender mother to a boy who is just leaving home for an apprenticeship, may drop like gentle dew from Heaven upon you. A few sentences from a kind and prudent father given to the daughter, still unconverted, as she enters upon her married life, and to her husband, kindly and affectionately put, may make that household forever a house for God.

A kind word dropped by a brother to a sister. A little letter written from a sister to her brother, though it should be only a line or two, may be God's arrow of Divine Grace. I have known even such little things as a tear or an anxious glance work wonders. You perhaps may have heard the story of Mr. Whitefield, who made it his wish wherever he stayed to talk to the members of the household about their souls—with each one personally. But stopping at a certain house of a Colonel, who was all that could be wished except a Christian, he was so pleased with the hospitality he received and so charmed with the general character of the good Colonel and his wife and daughters, that he did not like to speak to them about a decision as he would have done if they had been less amiable characters.

He had stopped with them for a week and during the last night, the Spirit of God visited him so that he could not sleep. "These people," he said, "have been very kind to me and I have not been faithful to them. I must do it before I go. I must tell them that whatever good thing they have, if they do not believe in Jesus they are lost." He arose and prayed. After praying he still felt contention in his spirit. His old nature said, "I cannot do it," but the Holy Spirit seemed to say, "Leave them not without warning." At last he thought of a device and prayed God to accept it. He wrote upon a diamond-shaped pane of glass in the window with his ring these words:—"One thing you lack."

He could not bring himself to speak to them, but went his way with many a prayer for their conversion. He had no sooner gone than the good woman of the house, who was a great admirer of his, said, "I will go up to his room—I want to look at the very place where the man of God has been." She went up and noticed on the window pane those words, "One thing you lack." It struck her with conviction in a moment. "Ah," she said, "I thought he did not care much about us, for I knew he always pleaded with those with whom he stopped and when I found that he did not do so with us, I thought we had vexed him, but I see how it was—he was too tender in mind to speak to us."

She called her daughters up. "Look there, girls," she said, "see what Mr. Whitefield has written on the window, 'One thing you lack.' Call up your father." And the father came up and read that, too, "One thing you lack," and around the bed where the man of God had slept they all knelt down and sought that God would give them the one thing they lacked. And before they left that chamber they had found that one thing and the whole household rejoiced in Jesus! It is not long ago that I met with a friend, one of whose Church members preserves that very pane of glass in her family as an heirloom.

Now, if you cannot admonish and warn in one way, do it in another! But take care to clear your soul of the blood of your relatives and friends, so that it may never crimson your garments and accuse you before God's bar. So live and so speak and teach, by some means or other, that you shall have been faithful to God and faithful to the souls of men.

III. I must now take you to a third point. We have had the missionary disciple and his great object. We have now, thirdly, HIS WISE METHODS. I have touched upon this subject already, but I could not help it. Andrew, being zealous, was wise. Earnestness often gives prudence and puts a man in the possession of tact, if not of talent. Andrew used what ability he had. If he had been as some young men are of my acquaintance, he would have said, "I would like to serve God. How I would like to preach! And I would require a large congregation."

Well, there is a pulpit on every street in London—there is a most wide and effectual door for preaching in this great city of ours beneath God's blue sky. But this young zealot would rather prefer an easier berth than the open air, and, because he is not invited to the largest pulpits, does nothing. How much better it would be if, like Andrew, he began to use the ability he had among those who are accessible to him, and from there stepped to something else and from that to something else, advancing year by year!

Sirs, if Andrew had not been the means of converting his brother, the probabilities are that he never would have been an Apostle. Christ had some reason in the choice of His Apostles to their office and perhaps the ground of His choice of Andrew as an Apostle was this—"He is an earnest man, he brought me Simon Peter. He is always speaking privately to individuals. I will make an Apostle of him." Now, you young men, if you become diligent in tract distribution, diligent in the Sunday school, you are likely men to be made into ministers. But if you stop and do nothing until you can do everything, you will remain useless—an impediment to the Church instead of being a help to her!

Dear Sisters in Jesus Christ, you must, none of you, dream that you are in a position in which you can do nothing at all. That is such a mistake in Providence as God cannot commit. You must have some talent entrusted to you and something given you to do which no one else can do. Out of this whole structure of the human body, every little muscle, every single cell has its own secretion and its own work. And though some physicians have said this and that organ might be spared, I believe that there is not a single thread in the whole embroidery of human nature that could well be spared—the whole of the fabric is required.

So in the mystical body, the Church, the least member is necessary. The most uncomely member of the Christian Church is necessary for its growth. Find out, then, what your sphere is and occupy it! Ask God to tell you what is your niche and stand in it, occupying the place till Jesus Christ shall

come and give you your reward! Use what ability you have and use it at once! Andrew proved his wisdom in that he set great store by a single soul. He bent all his efforts at first upon one man. Afterwards, Andrew, through the Holy Spirit, was made useful to scores, but he began with one. What a task for the mathematician, to value one soul! One soul sets all Heaven's bells ringing by its repentance. One sinner that repents makes angels rejoice! What if you spend a whole life pleading and laboring for the conversion of that one child? If you win that pearl it shall pay you your life's worth. Be not, therefore, dull and discouraged because your class declines in numbers, or because the mass of those with whom you labor reject your testimony.

If a man could earn but one in a day he might be satisfied. "One what?" asks one. I meant not one penny, but 1,000 pounds. "Ah," you say, "that would be an immense reward." So if you earn but one soul you must reckon what that one is—it is one for numeration, but for value it exceeds all that earth could show. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his soul? And what loss would it be to you, dear Brother, if you did lose all the world and gained your soul and God made you useful in the gaining of the souls of others? Be content and labor in your sphere, even if it is small, and you will be wise.

You may imitate Andrew in not going far afield to do good. Many Christians do all the good they can five miles off from their own house, when the time they take to go there and back might be well spent in the vineyard at home. I do not think it would be a wise regulation of the parochial authorities if they required the inhabitants of St. Mary, Newington, to remove the snow from the pavement of St. Pancras and the inhabitants of St. Pancras to keep the pavement of St. Mary, Newington, clean. It is best and most convenient that each householder should sweep before his own door—and so it is our duty, as Believers, to do all the good we can in the place where God has been pleased to locate us and especially in our own households.

If every man has a claim upon me, much more my own offspring. If every woman has some demand upon me as to her soul, so far as my ability goes, much more such as are of my own flesh and blood. Piety must begin at home as well as charity. Conversion should begin with those who are nearest to us in ties of relationship. Brothers and Sisters, during this month I stir you up—not to be attempting missionary labors for India, not to be casting eyes of pity across to Africa, not to be occupied so much with tears for popish and heathen lands—as for your own children, your own flesh and blood, your own neighbors, your own acquaintances. Lift up your cry to Heaven for them and then afterwards you shall preach among the nations!

Andrew goes to Cappadocia in his later life, but he begins with his brother. And you shall labor where you please in years to come, but first of all your own household! First of all those who are under your own shadow must receive your guardian care. Be wise in this thing. Use the ability you have and use it among those who are near at hand. Perhaps somebody will be saying, "How did Andrew persuade Simon Peter to come to Christ"? Two or three minutes may be spent in answering that enquiry. He did so, first, by narrating his own personal experience. He said, "We have found the Messiah."

What you have experienced of Christ tell to others. He did so next by intelligently explaining to him what it was he had found. He did not say he had found someone who had impressed him, but he knew not who He was. He told him he had found Messiah, that is, Christ. Be clear in your knowledge of the Gospel and your experience of it and then tell the Good News to those whose

soul you seek. Andrew had power over Peter because of his own decided conviction. He did not say, "I hope I have found Christ," but, "I have found Him." He was sure of that! Get full assurance of your own salvation. There is no weapon like it. He that speaks doubtingly of what he would convince another, asks that other to doubt his testimony. Be positive in your experience and your assurance, for this will help you.

Andrew had power over Peter because he put the good news before him in an earnest fashion. He did not say to him, as though it were a commonplace fact, "The Messiah has come," but no, he communicated it to him as the most weighty of all messages with becoming tones and gestures, I doubt not, "We have found the Messiah, which is called Christ!"

Now then, Brothers and Sisters, to your own kinsfolk tell your belief, your enjoyments, and your assurance! Tell all judiciously, with assurance of the truth of it, and who can tell whether God may not bless your work?

IV. My time is past. I meant to have spoken of THE SWEET REWARD Andrew had. His reward being that he won a soul—won his brother's soul—won such a treasure! He won no other than that Simon who at the first cast of the Gospel net, when Christ had made him a soul-fisherman, caught 3,000 souls at a single haul! Peter, a very prince in the Christian Church! One of the mightiest of the servants of the Lord, in all his later usefulness, would be a comfort to Andrew. I should not wonder but what Andrew would say in days of doubt and fear, "Blessed be God that He has made Peter so useful! Blessed be God that ever I spoke to Peter! What I cannot do, Peter will help to do. And while I sit down in my helplessness, I can feel thankful that my dear brother, Peter, is honored in bringing souls to Christ."

In this house today there may sit an unconverted Whitefield! In your class this afternoon there may be an unsaved John Wesley, a Calvin, and a Luther—mute and inglorious—yet who is to be called, by God's Grace, through you. Your fingers may yet wake to ecstasy the living heart that up till now has not been tuned to the praise of Christ! You may kindle the fire which shall light up a sacred sacrifice of a consecrated life to Christ! Only be up and doing for the Lord Jesus! Be importunate and prayerful! Be zealous and self-sacrificing. Unite with us, during this month, in your daily prayers!

Constantly, while in business, let your hearts go up for the blessing, and I make no doubt of it, that, when we have proved our God by prayer, He will pour us down such a blessing that we shall not have room to receive it! The Lord make it so, for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 1:19-51.

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John 1,43-45 #2375 - Found by Jesus--And Finding J

FOUND BY JESUS—AND FINDING JESUS

NO. 2375

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 26, 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 24 ,1888.

"The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found

Philip, and said to him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida,

the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said

to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and

the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

John 1:43-45.

FOR a soul to come to Jesus is the grandest event in its history! It is spiritually dead till that day, but it then begins to live—and a saved man may reckon his age from the time in which he first knew the Lord. That day of first knowing Christ is important in the highest degree because it affects all the man's past life. It sheds another light on all the years that have gone by. If he has lived in sin, as no doubt he has, the transaction of that day blots out all the sin. The day in which a man comes to Christ—that very day—his transgressions and iniquities are blotted out, even as the thick clouds are driven from the sky when God's strong wind chases them away! Is not that a grand day, in which our sins are cast into the depths of the sea so that from then on it can be said of them, "They may be sought for, but they shall not be found; yes, they shall not be, says the Lord"?

I say that the day in which a soul comes into contact with Christ is the greatest day of its history because all the past is changed by it! And, as for the present, what a different life does a man begin to live on the day in which he finds the Lord! He commences to live in the Light of God instead of being dead in the darkness! He begins to enjoy the privileges of liberty, instead of suffering the horrors of slavery! He is started on the way to Heaven, instead of continuing on the road to Hell! He is such a new creature that he cannot tell how changed he is. One said to me, "Sir, the change in me is of this kind—either the whole world is altered, or else I am." So is it when we are brought to know Christ—it is a real, total, radical change.

With many, it is a most joyous alteration. They feel like the man who had been lame, and who, when Peter spoke to him in the name of Jesus, and lifted him up so that his feet and ankle bones received strength, was not satisfied with walking, for we read, "He, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." He was walking, leaping and praising God! Do you wonder at it? If you had lost the use of your legs for a while, you would feel like leaping and praising God when you had them all right, again!

Volume 40 1And thus is it with a soul when it first finds the Savior. Oh, happy, happy day when the miraculous hand of Christ takes away the infirmities of the soul and makes the lame man to leap as a hart, and causes the tongue of the dumb to sing!

The day in which a man comes to Christ is also a wonderful day in its effect upon all his future. It is as when the helm of a ship is put right about—the man now sails in a totally different direction. His future will never be what his past was. There may be faults. There may be infirmities and shortcomings, but there will never be the old love of sin any more. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." This is God's own promise to us, given through His servant, Paul. When Christ comes to our soul, He so breaks the neck of sin, that though it lives a struggling, dying life and often makes a deal of howling in the heart, yet it is doomed to die. The Cross of Christ has broken its back and broken its neck, too, and die it must! Henceforth the man is bound for holiness and bound for Heaven!

Now, dear Friends, have any of you come to Christ? I know that you have, the great mass of you, and I bless God, and so do you, that it is so with you. But if there are any of you who have never come to the Savior, I wish that this might be the night when you should find Him. I am but a poor lame preacher—you are not often troubled with the sight of one sitting down and preaching—yet I think that if I had lost my legs and had always to lie on my back, I would like, even then, to preach Christ Crucified, and to—

"Tell to sinners round, What a dear Savior I have found."

I do pray that some of you, tonight, made to think all the more by the infirmity of the preacher, may be led to seek and to find the Savior. And then it shall be a happy day, indeed, for you, as it has been for so many more.

I am going to talk to you about Philip's conversion and first, I ask you to notice, in our text, the convert's description of it— "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." That is Philip's description of it—"We have found Jesus." It was a true description, but it was not all the truth, so, in the second place, we will notice the Holy Spirit's description of it—"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip." Philip's account of the incident is that he found Christ, but the Holy Spirit's record of it is that Christ found Philip. They are both true, however, although the latter is the fuller. We will talk a little about both descriptions of Philip's conversion.

I. First then, THE CONVERT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS COMING TO CHRIST is given in these words, "We have found...Jesus," and what he says is perfectly true.

If any of you is saved, it will be by finding Christ—by your personally making a discovery of Him, as that man did who found the treasure that was hid in the field. There must be a search for Christ, but if there is a search for Him, we may be certain of this one thing—there will first be a consciousness of needing Him. Philip had sought Christ, or else he would never have said that he had found Him, but, before that, Philip knew that there was need of a Messiah. When he looked round about on the world and on the Church, he said to himself, "Oh, that the promised Messiah would come! There is great need of Him. The people need Him, the Church needs Him, the world needs Him." When Philip looked into his own heart, he said, "Oh, for the coming of the Messiah! I feel that I need Him! I have urgent need of Him."

Dear Hearer, do you feel that you need a Savior? You never will seek Him until you feel your need of Him. You must recognize that there is sin in you, sin for which you cannot make Atonement, sin that you cannot overcome. You must realize that you need another and a stronger arm than your own, that you need Divine help, that you need One who can be your Brother to sympathize with you, and be patient with you, and yet who can be the Mighty God to conquer all your sin for you! You need a Savior—that is the first thing that will prompt you to search for Him.

Needing a Messiah, Philip read the Scriptures concerning Him. He speaks about Moses and the Prophets and of what they had written concerning the promised Deliverer. O my dear Hearers, if you need to find Christ, you must search the Scriptures, for they testify of Him! Oh, that you did search the Scriptures, more, with the definite objective of finding the Savior! Probably the great majority of unconverted people never read their Bibles at all, or they read only just enough to satisfy their curiosity, or their conscience. Perhaps they read the Bible as a part of literature which cannot be quite ignored, but they do not take down the Holy Book and read it carefully and prayerfully, saying, "Oh, that I might find holiness, here! Oh, that I might find Christ, here!" If they did, it would not be long before they found Jesus. Well does Dr. Watts sing—

"Laden with guilt and full of fears, I fly to You, my Lord, And not a glimpse of hope appears But in Your written Word! The volume of my Father's Grace Does all my griefs assuage, Here I behold my Savior's face Almost on every page."

He who reads the Bible with the view of finding Christ will not be long before some passage of Scripture will seem to leap up to attract his attention, as though it were set on fire—and then it will speak to him of Jesus, whispering to him of the great Sacrifice on Calvary and speaking to his heart of Divine Love and Mercy. Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be—in the pages of Scripture—and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus!

But then Philip also gave himself to prayer. We are not told so, but we feel sure of it. He asked the Lord to reveal Christ to him, to guide him to where the Christ would be, to let him know the Christ. Oh, if you want to be saved, be much in prayer! I do not mean merely saying prayers—what is the good of that? I do not mean simply saying fine words of your own, merely for the sake of uttering them. Prayer is communing with God! It is asking the Lord for what you really feel that you need. What wagon loads of sham prayers are shot down at God's door, as if they were so much rubbish thrown away! Let it not be so with your prayers, but speak to the Lord out of your very soul when you come to the Throne of Grace. I cannot give you a better prayer than the one we have been singing—

"Gracious Lord, incline Your ear, My requests vouchsafe to hear! Hear my never ceasing cry— Give me Christ, or else I die! Lord, deny me what You will, Only ease me of my guilt. Suppliant at Your feet I lie, Give me Christ, or else I die! You freely save the lost. Only in Your Grace I trust: With my earnest suit comply— Give me Christ, or else I die! You have promised to forgive All who in Your Son believe— Lord, I know You cannot lie Give me Christ, or else I die!"

With the open Bible before you to guide your understanding, kneel down and say, "O God, graciously reveal Christ to me by Your Holy Spirit. Bring me to know Him! Bring me, this day, to find Him as my own Savior!"

It is certain, also, that Philip realized that he might claim the Messiah for himself. One of the things that every man, who would find the Savior must do is to make sure of his right to come and take the Savior. The question that puzzles many is, "May I have the Savior?" My dear Friends, every sinner in the world is permitted to come and trust the Savior, if he wills to do so. "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "But," asks some troubled soul, "will Christ have me?" That is not the question—the question is, "Will you have Christ?" He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." It is you who cast out the Savior, not the Savior who casts you out! The bolt to the door is on the inside—it is you who have bolted it and it is you who must undo the bolt and invite the Savior to enter your heart. He is willing enough to come in—wherever there is a soul that wants Him, He comes at once! Therefore, do not raise any quibbling questions about whether a sinner may come to Christ, or may not come! Is he not commanded to come? We are told to preach the Gospel to every creature, and He who gave us our great commission also added, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

Philip accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you ask, "What am I to do that I may find the Savior?" Well, what you have to do is, practically, this—accept Him! If you were sick and the doctor stood before you with the medicine ready prepared, you would not say, "What am I to do with this medicine, Sir? Am I to rub my hand on the outside of the bottle?" You know very well that there are certain directions as to how much is to be taken and how often. What you have to do with the medicine is to take it! "But I cannot make that medicine work for my restoration." Who said you could? All you have to do is to take it. It is just this that you have to do with Christ—take Him, accept Him, receive Him. Remember the 12th verse of this chapter out of which our text is taken—"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

That is it, you see, receive Him, believe on His name. "But surely I am to do some good works." Certainly, you will do good works after you have received Christ. But for your soul's salvation, you are to do no good works, but simply to receive Christ. "Oh, but I must lead a holy life!" Yes, and you will lead a holy life after you have received Christ. But in order to the leading of a holy life you must have a new heart—and to get a new heart—you have to receive Christ! He will change you, He will renew you, He will make you a new creature in Himself! What you have to do is to receive Him and to believe on His name. O my dear Hearers, I trust that I am speaking to some, this evening, who will understand what I am saying! I fear that I am addressing many who will not believe, though I may put the Truth of God as plainly as it can be preached. You know that you may hold a candle right against a blind man's eyes and yet he will not see, even then. The Holy Spirit must open your eyes to see what is meant by this receiving Christ, or else you will not

understand what you are to do. You are not to give anything to Christ—you are to take all from Him! You are not to bring anything to Christ—you are to come to Him just as you are—and He will bring to you everything that you need. Then, when you have accepted Him by the simple act of faith, you will say with Philip, "We have found Jesus!" That is the convert's description and a very good one, too—"We have found Jesus."

II. But now, secondly, what is THE HOLY SPIRIT'S DESCRIPTION? I will read to you the very words again. Here they are—"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip." Jesus finds Philip before Philip finds Jesus. Philip finds Jesus because Jesus has found Philip.

Now, notice, that this is the previous work. It came before Philip's own finding. Jesus would go forth into Galilee to find Philip. Dear Friends, I remember very well that after I had found the Lord, I did not, at first, fully understand the Doctrines of Grace. I had heard them preached, but I had not comprehended them. I think at the time I would have been very much puzzled with the Doctrine of Election if anybody had spoken to me about it. But I was sitting down, one day, gratefully reflecting on what God had done for me. I knew that my sins were pardoned, I knew that I was accepted in Christ Jesus and I knew that I was renewed in heart— and in one moment the revelation came to me—"All this is the work of God!" The instant I saw that Truth of God, I said to myself, "Yes, that is the fact, and God be glorified for it! But why has this great work been worked in me?"

I knew that there was no merit in me before the Lord had dealt in mercy with my soul, so I said to myself, "This is the effect of Sovereign, Distinguishing Grace." Then I understood in a moment how it is that God begins with us and that it is God's will and God's eternal purpose, which, after all, lie deeper down than our will or our purpose—and God's will and God's eternal purpose must have the Glory! What a revelation it was to me! I saw the Doctrines of Grace immediately and I think that anybody who has been brought to find the Savior and who, prayerfully studies the reasons for his salvation, can see the same Truths of God that the Lord revealed to me.

Because, first of all, you began to be thoughtful, did you not? Who made you thoughtful? You would never have found the Savior if you had not become thoughtful instead of careless and indifferent. Who made you think of Divine things? What influence was it which worked upon you and caused you to feel that you must think about eternity, and Heaven, and Hell? Surely it was God the Holy Spirit going forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, and dealing with you in mercy!

Then you had a sense of your need and of your sinfulness. There was a time when you had no such sense. Who gave it to you? Where do you think that repentance, that sorrow for sin, that desire after Christ came from? Did all that grow in your own fallen human nature? Ah, believe me, that dunghill never brought forth such fair flowers as these! No, it was Christ who sowed the good Seed in your soul—it was He who made you feel your need of Him!

Next, when you read the Bible, you understood it. You perceived that Jesus was the only Savior of sinners. You saw His fitness to meet your case and you understood the plan of salvation. Who made you understand it? I know that it is plain enough for a child to comprehend, but no one ever understands spiritual things except by the operation of the Spirit of God! It was the Holy Spirit who gave you the spiritual power by which you were able to grasp the simple Truth concerning the way of salvation.

Then you began to pray. I have already spoken of that matter. But who taught you to pray? You had not been accustomed to real prayer—you had often had great mouthfuls of words—that was all. But now you began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, the groaning of your spirit and the anguish of your heart as you cried to God! Who gave you that anguish? Who broke you all to pieces and made every broken bone cry out for mercy? Who, indeed, but Christ who worked mightily in your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit?

And when you yielded yourself up to Christ, when you believed in Jesus and found salvation, where did that faith come from? Is it not always the work of the Spirit of God? Is not faith the gift of God and do you not confess that it is so in your case? Once, when I was a little child, I thought I saw a needle moving across the table and I would have been wondering who made the needle march as it did, but I was old enough to understand that somebody was moving a magnet underneath the table and the needle was following the magnet which I could not see. Thus the Lord, with His mighty magnet of Grace, is often at work upon the hearts of men, and we think that their desire after God and their faith in Christ are of themselves. In a sense, the desire and the faith are their own, but there is a Divine Force that is at work upon them, producing these results! It is Jesus finding Philip, though Philip does not know it. Philip thinks that he is finding Jesus, but behind the veil it is Jesus finding Philip! This was the previous work.

And, dear Friends, this was very delightful work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice how it is put—"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip." O my blessed Lord, how He will go forth to find a soul! A journey is never too long for Him and He never wastes a day. "The day following Jesus would go forth, and He found Philip." Oh, may my Lord delight to come forth and find some of you! You are, tonight, in a place where He has found a good many. I pray that He may find some of you. Perhaps you do not know how it was that you came here. You did not mean to come out, tonight, but here you are in this crowd, in the thick of this great throng. My Lord has found many a precious jewel here—to itself it seemed nothing but a poor pebble, but to Him it was a diamond of the first water! O my Master, find some more of Your jewels tonight! Lord Jesus, come and find Philip, and find Mary, and then let Philip and Mary declare that they have found You!

When our dear Master goes forth to find a soul, it is very effectual work. He said to Philip, "Follow Me," and Philip at once followed Him. Christ did not need to preach a long sermon. His discourse contained only two words, "Follow Me." I will gladly end my sermon here if my Master will preach to some of you His two-worded sermon, "Follow Me," "Follow Me," "Follow Me!" "Come, poor Soul, you do not know the way! 'Follow Me.' You need someone to go before you, to be your leader, 'Follow Me.' You need someone to be your shelter, your companion, your all, 'Follow Me.'" That is what you have to do, good woman. You have been worrying about what you have heard from different preachers. Christ says to you, "Follow Me." That is what you have to do, young man! You have been reading those modern thought books till you do not know whether you are on your head or on your heels. Burn them! Jesus says, "Follow Me." I know that some of you have been distracted with all sorts of silly talk—let that go to the dogs. Jesus says, "Follow Me." The crucified Savior says, "Follow Me." Take Him for your Atonement! The risen Savior says, "Follow Me." Take Him for your life! The Savior on the Throne of God says, "Follow Me." Take Him for your joy! The Savior coming in Glory hereafter says, "Follow Me." Take Him to be your hope! "Follow Me." "Follow Me"—that is the text for tonight—and that is the sermon, too! Jesus said to Philip, "Follow

Me," and Philip followed Him, directly. And he not only followed Christ, but he immediately began to try to get others to follow Him!

Please notice, also, that Philip was found by Christ in a very different way from the other disciples. Two of them had been found through the teaching of John the Baptist, but Philip had apparently had no teaching. Another of the little company had been found through the private call of his brother. Philip may not have had any relative or friend to speak to him, but the Savior just said to him, "Follow Me," and he followed Him! Dear Friends, do not begin comparing your conversion with somebody else's. If the Lord Jesus Christ calls you and says to you, "Follow Me," and you follow Him, if there never was another soul converted in exactly the same way, it does not matter at all! If you have come to Him, if you have trusted in Him, you are saved.

The pith of all that I have to say is this. Do not get to worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit—and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when He bids you. They are perfectly consistent! Some persons have asked me, at times, to reconcile these two things, and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them." It would be quite as easy to state them as to meet them, for, in fact, there are none! "Oh, but," says one, "you tell me to believe in Christ and yet you constantly preach that faith is the work of the Spirit of God!" I know that I do. "You say that God has a chosen people." Yes, I do. "And yet you say that men are to choose Christ?" I do. "Well, how do you reconcile those two things?" Show me that there is any difficulty about the two things and then I will reconcile them. You imagine the difficulty, for there is none in reality! There does not exist any in practical life!

I believe that God has predestinated whether I am going down to the Lord's Supper at the close of this service, but I shall go down as well as my legs can carry me. "Oh," you say, "you make it out to be a matter of your own free will?" Yes, I do. "And yet you believe it to be God's eternal purpose?" Yes, I do. "Well, then, reconcile the two things." Again I say that there is no difficulty in the case! There is nothing to be reconciled, for both statements are true! You might as well ask me to reconcile the land and the water, or to reconcile the dog-star, Sirius, and a farthing rushlight. There is no quarrel between them and I have no time to waste on needless argument. Come to Christ! And if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you! If you find the Savior, it will be because the Savior first found you! Perhaps, in Heaven, you may see some difficulties and get them explained. Down here you need not see them and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's Grace, from first to last—yet is it true that the Grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning [See Sermon #2030, Volume 34—Moses—His Faith and Decision—Read/download entire sermon athttp://www.spurgeongems.org .] to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

I have done when I have said this one thing more. Philip, Peter and Andrew were all of Bethsaida—"Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." These three good men, these three Apostles, were all of Bethsaida. That ought to be some comfort to many of you, my dear Hearers, because there are numbers of you who are here, tonight, who are of Bethsaida. Sitting all round me, I see people who, I believe, are of Bethsaida. "Oh," you say, "we were never

there in all our lives!" Listen. Bethsaida was one of the places in which Christ had done many of His mighty works and you remember that when the people repented not, Jesus uttered over them that sad lamentation, "Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you."

Now, there are some of you here who have heard the Gospel for many years and have seen the power of the Grace of God in your families—and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgement, than it will be for you, inasmuch as you have rejected the Savior! But, as there were these three men—Philip and Peter and Andrew who were of Bethsaida—and I should think that the home of James and John was not very far off from the same place—why should you not come to Christ? Why should you not become members of His Church and, if it is the Lord's will, preachers of His Word? God grant that it may be so!

Oh, how I long in my soul for the salvation of every one of you! Many of you who have come here, tonight, are strangers to me. I trust that you will not be strangers to my Master! Tonight, I pray you, here in the very heat of midsummer, before the harvest shall be past and the summer shall be ended, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call you upon Him while He is near! Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Receive Christ! Trust in Him! God grant that you may do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 1:29-51

Verse 29. The next day—This chapter is a record of the events that occurred on different days. Sometimes God does great things in a single day—one extraordinary day may have more in it than a hundred ordinary years! It is well for us to try to live by the day and not to let any day pass without some good action having been done in it. Let us never have to cry, "I have lost a day."

29. John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. We ought never to be slow in delivering such a message as that which John the Baptist uttered! I do not wonder that as soon as John knew that Jesus was the Messiah, he told the good news to others! Have you found Jesus? Tell your brother, tonight, or, if not tonight, go as soon as you can, and bid him, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." 30-34. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man who is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. John was acquainted with Jesus, for they were related to one another, and were brought

up together, but he did not officially know Him as the Messiah until He saw the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on Him, for that was the Lord's token by which he was to recognize Him. He refused, therefore, to follow any knowledge or judgment of his own. He would not know Jesus as the Christ until he saw the private sign for which the Lord had told him to look. As soon as he saw that, then John said that he knew Him, and as soon as he thus knew Him, he began to preach Him! Has the Lord given you in your soul a token that Christ is your Savior? Do you know Him by the witness of the Holy Spirit? Then go and speak of Him to others and, like John, say, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Let this be your one business between here and Heaven.

35, 36. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! "Again the next day." See how the Evangelist goes by days in his record. John preached the same sermon two days running—and if you proclaim Christ and Him crucified—you may preach Him 200 days running, but you will never preach Him too often! If you preach Christ as the Lamb of God, the great Sin-Bearer, you may be always at that blessed work. There are some who very seldom preach Christ as bearing the sin of men, so that others of us must do it all the more often to make up for their shortcomings. As for me, I can say with Charles Wesley—

"His only righteousness I show, His saving Truth proclaim; 'Tis all my business here below, To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

37. And the two disciples heard Him speak and they followed Jesus. It is hard preaching when you preach away your congregation, but John did this deliberately. He wished these two no longer to be his disciples, but to become the disciples of Jesus. He had mastered the meaning of his own words, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and he was quite willing that it should be so—"The two disciples heard Him speak and they followed Jesus."

38, 39. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said unto them, What do you seek? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where do You dwell? He said to them, Come and see. He gave them a full invitation to come to the place where He tarried and see for themselves. That is what Jesus still says, "Come and see." If any of you want to know Him, "Come and see." You are perfectly welcome to "Come and see" all that Jesus has to show you! 39. They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. The best part of that day was the portion which they spent with Jesus—it was the best day they had ever enjoyed, for they lived with Jesus! It was also the beginning of better days for these two disciples, for, having once lived with Jesus, they learned never to live without Him. Oh, that we, also, may abide with Him!

40, 41. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. Where should missionary work begin? A brother should begin with his brother. It is all very well to have a desire to go to the heathen in Africa, but you had better begin work as a missionary in England, and then go to Africa. He who cannot win his brother is not likely to win anybody else. "He first found his own brother, Simon." This Andrew, who was afterwards to bring so many to Christ, must begin at home and succeed there. If we are not faithful with one or two relatives, how can God trust us with a pulpit and a congregation?

42. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jonas. "Simon, son of a dove, your name may point you out as being timid—mind where you wing your flight."

42. You shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone. Something more solid than the son of a pigeon! Something more stable than the son of a dove! Christ changes men's names and changes their natures, too. He can make the most fickle of us to become firm and steadfast. Oh, that He would thus work by His Grace upon us!

43, 44. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and found Philip, and said to him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. "The day following." See, Friends, what a wonderful chapter this is! There is a book called, The Book of Days. I call this chapter, the Chapter of Days. Every day seems memorable for some great event. "Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter," was a poor, miserable village, but God greatly honored it. Great works often begin in little places. The best of beings came out of the despised town of Nazareth! And three of the best of men—Philip, Andrew and Peter—came out of Bethsaida.

45. Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. True faith may make blunders. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, except by reputation, and He was Jesus of Bethlehem quite as much as He was Jesus of Nazareth—but true faith is accepted of God even though it makes some mistakes. It believes God's Word and it believes God's Son and, therefore, it shall be accepted.

46. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there be any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see. Christ had said, "Come and see." Now Philip used the same words, "Come and see." It is always right to follow the example that the Lord Jesus has set for us!

47, 48. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael said to Him, When did You know me? You may remember that, a short time ago, I preached a sermon upon Nathanael. [See Volume 34, No. 2021, "Nathanael—Or, the Ready Believer and His Reward."—Read/download entire sermon athttp://www.spurgeongems.org .] He was a kind of Jewish John Blunt, a man who always spoke his mind. He had a mind and he had a mind to speak it—and he spoke his mind! So, the moment that Christ spoke of him, he asked, "When did You know me?" He was conscious that Christ knew him and, being a man who was altogether free from cunning and craftiness, he pointedly asked how Christ came to know him.

48. Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. What was he doing under the fig tree? Jesus knew and Nathanael knew, but nobody else knew and, perhaps, nobody else ever will know. That was a secret between Christ and Nathanael. He was doing something there that he regarded as quite private—and the Savior's allusion to his being under the fig tree was the most plain proof he could have of Christ's Divinity. "Oh," he thought, "He who can remind me of that secret transaction must be God."

49, 50. Nathanael answered and said to Him: Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. You who are honest in heart. You who can be convinced by a single argument—and, mark you, one good argument is as convincing as

20 good arguments, and a great deal better than a 100 bad ones—you who are willing to be led by a single thread shall be led! If you are willing to believe on what is clear evidence, you shall have more evidence—"you shall see greater things than these." God will show much to that man who has eyes with which to see. He who will not see and does not wish to see, shall grow more and more blind—and the darkness shall thicken about him.

51. And He said to him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. He could see actually what Jacob saw only in a dream when he beheld that wonderful stairway of Light which leads from earth to Heaven, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His Manhood and His Godhead bridges the distance between us and God!

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Chapter 77

John 1,45 #3225 - Finding and Following Christ

FINDING AND FOLLOWING CHRIST

NO. 3225

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24H, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 21, 1870.

"We have found Him."

John 1:45.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 43 to 45 is #2375, Volume 40—

FOUND BY JESUS—AND FINDING JESUS

—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I HOPE there are many here who are seeking Christ, but I feel sure that there are with us many more who can truthfully say, "We have passed beyond that stage, for we have found Him." Others may declare that there never was such a Person as Jesus of Nazareth, but we know there was and still is, for, "we have found Him," and we are living in happy daily fellowship with Him! We bear our glad testimony to what the Grace of God has done for us and we say with Philip, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," whom we also worship as the Son of God.

Notice how positively Philip speaks. He had, himself, only just been found by Christ, yet he does not say, "We think we have found the Messiah," or, "We hope we have found the promised Deliverer." No, without the slightest hesitation he says, "We have found Him." This is a matter about which it is possible for us to be quite as positive as Philip was. There are abundant reasons why we may have a well-grounded assurance that Christ is our Savior if we have truly trusted in Him. Some have thought and said that it is not possible for us to know we are saved. Thank God that is not true and many can adopt the Inspired Language of the Apostle John and say, "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Such positiveness as this is attainable, by God's Grace, by every true Believer in Jesus Christ!

Let me remind you, first, that it ought to be so. Whether we are saved or not is a matter of the greatest importance to us. We cannot afford to let it rest upon a, "perhaps," or a, "maybe." If I have really found Christ, my sins are forgiven me for His sake—and this is a fact of which I ought to be quite certain. If I have found the Lord Jesus Christ, I am reconciled to God by the death of His Son, I have been adopted into the family of God, I may confidently look to God for the supply of all my needs, both for this life and for that which is to come—and I may expect to be taken at the right time to dwell with Him forever. Such glorious blessings as these ought not to be mere matters of speculation with us! Our possession of them ought to be the result of clean, unmistakable evidence. If I have not found Christ, I am in danger of death every day and of the Hell that is the everlasting prison of all unbelievers. If I have not found Christ, I am still without hope and without God in the world—"condemned already"—because I have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God! Surely I ought not to go to bed tonight with that all-important question unsettled. I can understand a man being in doubt upon this matter, but I cannot understand his resting comfortably while it is a matter of doubt! If you are content to be in doubt as to whether you are entitled to your estates, or as to whether you are mortally diseased or not, well, those are only minor matters compared with the salvation of your souls! God forbid that you should be willing to let the far greater matter reMal. in suspense! Seek the aid of the Holy Spirit and never rest satisfied until you know assuredly that you have found the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior!

A poor woman, some nights ago, wrapping around herself her poor thin shawl, was walking along the street because she had nowhere else to go. And as she was passing a certain building, she saw written over the door, "For the homeless." "That is the place for me," she said, and in she went. Now, my Friend, are you a sinner? Then I have to tell you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Are you lost? Then I have to tell you that He came to seek and to save the lost. It would have done that poor woman no good at all to sit down on a rich man's doorstep and consider how poor she was—she got what she needed by going to the Home for the Homeless—and Jesus Christ is a Home for Homeless souls, so away with you, poor homeless soul, and find in Him the shelter that you need! May God's Grace enable you to flee straight away to Christ, for if you do, He will not refuse to receive you!

Remember, also, that no real spiritual comfort can come to us until we know that we have found Christ. Perhapses and maybes are like thorns in our pillow—they prevent us from resting. Or they are like stones in a pilgrim's shoes—they make walking very uncomfortable for him. To be able to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day," is to have a fountain of consolation springing up within your heart! But to have to cry—

"'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?" is to be in continual unhappiness! The man who is in such a state as that may be safe, but he cannot have joy and peace. He must be weak, trembling and tossed to and fro, like the waves of the troubled sea when it cannot rest. It is only when we can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise," that there is the music of deep and lasting joy in the songs that we send up to Heaven!

Let me add that you may confidently hope to attain this assurance of knowledge because so many others have already done so. I have reminded you of Philip, John and Paul, but such knowledge

as this was not confined to the Apostolic age—it is at this moment the priceless privilege of tens of thousands of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! If I were now to say, "Let all those Brothers and Sisters who know that Christ is theirs stand up and testify to this fact," I believe that the bulk of this congregation would at once rise! And I pray that you weaker ones, you timid and trembling souls may seek Him who can work this great Grace in you, also, so that you, too, may be able to say as positively as Philip did, "We have found Him."

I. Now I am going, with the Holy Spirit's help, to suggest a few reflections for those to bear in mind who can say, "We have found Him." And the first is this—IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, HE MUST HAVE FIRST FOUND US.

Two verses (v 43) before our text, we read that this very man who had found Christ, had himself been found by Christ. It is probably true, my dear Brother or Sister in Christ, that you were brought to know the Lord through some human instrumentality. A godly father or mother, a faithful minister of the Gospel, a loving Sunday school teacher or other Christian friend. Or the reading of the Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may have been the means of your conversion. There is a very precious link between the instrument of your salvation and yourself which you ought never to forget. Surely we can never cease to thank God for the man or the woman whom He used to lead us out of darkness into His marvelous Light! Yet that holy man did not convert us. That gracious woman could never have given us a new heart and a right spirit. We must trace our new birth to its superhuman origin—it was the Lord, and the Lord alone who worked that wondrous miracle of regeneration! "You has HE quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." If the Lord has not turned you from the error of your ways, you are still in the broad road that leads to destruction! If He has not found you as the shepherd finds his lost sheep, you are still wandering on the dark mountains of sin and woe! And, as the sheep would never find its shepherd unless he first found it, so you, if you have found Christ, must first have been found by Christ!

I want you to go still further back and to remember that, inasmuch as you never imagined that it was wrong for Christ to save you, although He

Volume 56 3has not saved all other sinners and although some in your own family have not yet found Him— and although some who attend the same place of worship as you do have not found Him, while you have found Him and been found by Him—you have never thought that it was wrong for Christ to make this difference between you and others. I want you to also remember that whatever Christ has done, He must have always meant to do—it must have been His eternal purpose to do it! Unless you are a careless blunderer, you do not do anything without having made up your mind to do it. And certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ has not acted in this great matter of the salvation of souls without thought and deliberation! Do you not see that this brings us to the Doctrine of Election? Many people do not like that Doctrine, but all Christian people, though they may not believe it as we do, must believe that which is the very essence of it—for if there is a difference between ourselves and others, it must have been Christ who made it by His Grace! And as He made it, then it must have been right for Him to make it, and it could not have been wrong for Him to purpose to make that difference! We do not believe that Christ does anything without a plan and a purpose. And it makes no difference whether the purpose was in His mind a year ago or from all eternity! I mean that there would be the same difficulty with regard to the Doctrine, though I see no difficulty in it at all. Well then, the Lord Jesus Christ purposed from all eternity to

work His good work in you by His Holy Spirit—to bring you to repent of your sin and to trust in His atoning Sacrifice—and, therefore, it is a part of His promise to bring you home to Heaven to dwell with Him forever! Yet there have been and still are many in this world who have not found Him—more eminent than you are, people of greater ability and loftier station. There are wise men who have never become wise unto salvation and rich men who do not possess this heavenly treasure. There are mighty kings who lord it over mighty hosts of men, who know not the Lord of Hosts and yield not homage to the Lord Jesus Christ! When you think of all this, do you not marvel that you should have been found by Christ and that you should have found Christ? Do you not wonder that God should have chosen you, that Christ should have redeemed you, that the Holy Spirit should have regenerated you? And will you not bless and praise the Lord to all eternity for making you the simple subject of His Grace while such multitudes and so many far more mighty ones have been passed by?

This teaching, which seems to me to be so simple and plain, lies at the root of the most profound Doctrines of Holy Writ and it is, at the same time, one of the most practical Truths of God in the whole of the Divine Revelation! Nothing makes us love Christ more than knowing that He has loved us with an everlasting Love and, therefore, with loving kindness has drawn us unto Himself. Nothing makes us crave for likeness to Him so much as the knowledge that He has chosen us and ordained us, that we should go and bring forth fruit and that our fruit should remain even, "fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life." I wish that this Truth was understood and believed by all Christians, for it is God's Truth, and a very precious Truth. I feel sure that it is believed by many who have not recognized it or fully understood it. I remember preaching in the open air to a great crowd of miners, most of them Methodists. And as I preached, they shouted, "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord," and so on. Just as they were in full cry in that fashion, I paused a moment and then said, "This brings me to the Doctrine of Election." I could almost feel the cold shiver of disappointment that seemed to pass through the crowd. And it appeared likely that there would be no more "Hallelujahs" during that discourse. But I said to them, "In your hearts you really believe that Doctrine, though you imagine you do not. And before I have finished my sermon, I will prove it to you, and many of you will shout, 'Praise the Lord,' for it even more loudly than you were doing just now." I saw the look of incredulity upon their faces, but I went on. "Here is a man who was once a drunk, a swearer, a Sabbath-breaker, a thief, a liar and everything that was bad. But a great change has somehow come over him and he is quite a new man compared with what he used to be. There is no such alteration in many of his old companions and friends—who can have made him so different from what he once was? Here is a glorious golden crown and whoever has made this man to be such a contrast to what he was before ought to have this crown placed upon his head!" Then I said, "Shall I put the crown on the man's own head? Did he make this change in himself?" "No, no" came the answer from all parts of the crowd. "Well then," I asked, "On whose head shall I put the crown? Who is to have the glory of this man's conversion?" At once they cried, "The Lord, the Lord alone! Put the crown on His head." So far we were all agreed and I, therefore, asked next, "Was it wrong for God to make this difference?" No one dared to say that it was, so I advanced to my next question, "As it was right for God to make this difference, was it not also right for God to plan beforehand that He would do so? The Lord did not act without a set purpose and, therefore, as He is to be crowned for the action, is He not also to be crowned for the purpose to do it?" "Yes, that He is!" cried the crowd. "Bless His name, hallelujah!" So I won the hallelujahs, by His Grace, of my Methodist friends for the Doctrine of Election as I said I would!

We do not preach, we have never preached and we shall never preach that God has created any man for the purpose of destroying him! But we do preach and shall preach as long as we live, that salvation is of the Lord and all of Grace from first to last! And, therefore, that all the glory of it must be given to the Divine hand that worked the work, to the eternal mind that planned the work and to the great heart of love that was the

Volume 56 5Fountain and Source from which the gracious purpose sprang! The only explanation of the whole matter is the one we have so often sung—

"What was there in you that could merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight? 'Twas even so, Father,' you always must sing, 'Because it seemed good in Your sight.' Then give all the glory to His holy name, To Him all the glory belongs, Be yours the high joy to still sound forth His fame, And crown Him in each of your songs."

II. My second observation is—IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US FOLLOW HIM. Philip found Him and followed Him all his days.

Christ was given to be the Leader and Commander of His people, so His people should all follow Him. You have followed Him, Beloved, but can you not follow Him yet more closely? You are His disciples, but can you not learn more of Him than you have yet learned? Let us follow our Jesus promptly. I want to be in such a state of heart and mind that the moment I know what Christ's will concerning me is, I do it! I would like to be a leaf borne along by the blessed current of His Divine Purpose— having no will or wish to resist the sacred influences of His unerring mind and loving heart—to obey His commands promptly and cheerfully and, not only to obey cheerfully, but also to suffer cheerfully if He so pleases! It is a blessed condition to be in to take anything and everything from Christ, whether it is a kiss or a blow—to do anything for Christ, whether it is pleasing to the flesh or not—to yield up everything for Christ, to be, indeed, a divine sacrifice for Him, which is, after all, only the "reasonable service" which He is fully entitled to claim from us! We read in the Revelation concerning some, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." And happy are they who imitate them, even while here on earth! Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I entreat you to leave no path untrodden where you can see the footprints of your Lord and Master! Jesus went to Jordan's stream and was baptized there by John—have you followed Him in this blessed ordinance? Jesus, even while living and laboring among sinners, was separate from them—are you living the separated life? What He did, let us do as far as it is in our power! What He was, let us be as far as that is possible! He was reviled, despised and rejected of men—so let us count it an honor to receive similar treatment for His sake. He was content to walk on the bleak side of the hill—let us not seek the sunny side by craving the world's esteem. Is this your heart's desire, Beloved? Do you sing—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I'll follow where He goes"?

Then mind that you not only sing those lines, but make them true in your life! Are any of you following Christ afar off, as Peter did? Then beware lest you fall as Peter did! Are you following Christ in your business, or do you forget Him when you are in the office or in the market? Do you follow Christ in your home, or do you forget Him when you are there? Some of you used to follow Jesus very closely and to be very warm friends of His—have you been growing cold towards Him? Oh, let this no longer be the case! If you have found Him, follow Him and follow Him "wherever He

goes."

III. Now, thirdly, IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US PRIZE HIM. It is no trifle that we find when we find Him, for He is the priceless pearl whose worth no man fully knows!

If I have found Him, how shall I prove that I prize Him? First, let me be willing to lose all that I have for Him. Does my present position in life involve me in sin? Then let me leave it rather than grieve my Lord. Is my business an evil one? Then let me renounce it at once, for if I do not, I shall have to renounce Him! Have I any companions who are the enemies of Christ? Then I dare not call them my friends. Is there some dear one with whom I have entered into such close association that it will draw me away from Christ? Then, while I can, let me break the connection, for I must give up all for the Christ who gave up all for me! The captain of a vessel, when his ship is in danger of sinking, will throw the most valuable cargo into the sea if, thereby, he may save the ship and the lives of all on board. And I must be willing to part with my joys, my pleasures, my money, my friends and all that I have rather than give up my Lord and Savior, for I must have Christ at any cost!

Further, if you have found Christ and want to prove that you can prize Him, study to find out all that you can about Him. Jesus Christ is a great mine of untold wealth and no man has ever yet perfectly explored that mine. Read the Scripture to learn all you can about Christ. Listen to any preacher or teacher who can tell you anything about Christ—and be sure to meditate as much as you can upon Christ. He is the chief among ten thousand—"yes, He is altogether lovely." At our first sight of Him, we fall in love with Him, but His choicest beauties are the hidden ones which we only find by diligent search and much fellowship with Him. As you get to know more of Him in His Person, in His work, in His office, in His promises, in His power, in His love—you will prize Him all the more until you would not set even Heaven, itself, in comparison with Him—for what would Heaven be if He were not there?

Further, Beloved, if you prize Christ as you ought, you will make all the use you can of Him. And He loves to be of use to His people. Is there any sin upon your conscience? Run to Him to remove it from you! Is there any trouble on your mind? Go and tell Jesus! Is there anything that is a burden to you? Cast your burdens upon Him and He will relieve you of them, or give you the Grace and strength to carry them! Remember that Jesus Christ is an everyday Savior, an all-theyear-round Savior, a whole-of-life Savior, a Savior for the body as well as for the soul! Whatever there may be lacking in you, there is nothing lacking in Him

Volume 56 7and He can supply all that you lack! He is the Bread of Life, so feed upon Him! He is the Light of the World, so see everything in the light that comes from Him! He is your All-in-All, so look for all in Him!

Show, too, that you prize Christ as you should by letting others see how you value Him. A bride who has many precious jewels will wear them where they can be seen and admired by others. And we, too, are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ who is more precious than all the gems in the universe! Some professing Christians are apt to blush at any allusion to their Christianity—but if it is the blush of shame, they have cause to be ashamed of such blushing! I never hear of any man blushing because he is a peer of the realm, though there have been many of the so-called "nobility" who might well cause their fellow peers to blush. But to blush because one is a Christian,

oh, this must never be! As well might we blush at being likened to an angel! Suppose the ungodly point the finger of scorn at you—that is the only way in which such people can really honor you. Will you strike your colors because the enemy attacks you? No, no! Nail the flag to the mast and fight so bravely for Christ that the enemy has to strike his colors! It is the act of a pirate to sail under another flag, so whatever ship you meet on life's wide sea, fly the flag of your King and defy the devil and all his legions to do their worst! At home and abroad, in the House of God or in the street, in the market or wherever you may be, let friend and foe, alike, know that you belong to Christ! I would that all of us who are members of this Tabernacle might love the Lord with a far deeper and more fervent love than we have ever yet experienced. I know that there are some eminently gracious souls among us and I pray that their number may be greatly increased, but I am anxious lest, as a Church, we should fall to the low level of so many of the professing Christians of this age! Our Lord Jesus Christ deserves the very best that we can bring to Him, so let us give Him our hearts, our minds, our time, our talents and all we have, to show how greatly we prize Him whom we have found!

IV. Fourthly, and briefly, IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US NEVER PART WITH HIM. Philip became one of Christ's disciples, then one of His Apostles—and now he is with Christ forever!

Tomorrow you will go, young man, into the workshop or to the counter and your companions will laugh at you if you say you are a Christian. But do not part with Christ because of the laughter of fools! Some of you will be going to the Stock Exchange or to the various markets of this great city—but part not company with Christ by doing what is wrong. Hold Him fast and keep to that which is right, honest and true, for he is a traitor to Christ who gets even a penny by an unrighteous action! Tomorrow some of you may hear that which is blasphemous or foul— rebuke it in your Lord's name, for he who is silent when he ought to speak is tacitly denying his Lord and Master. Again I say to you, hold Him fast however much men may scoff at you for doing so, for such a treasure as Christ is well worth holding! Let no man separate you from your Lord. If you are truly His, I am persuaded that no one and nothing shall be able to part you. Though the devil himself should try to tear Christ away from you, he cannot do it, for Christ is stronger than Satan and He holds you with a Divine grip which the devil and all his hosts cannot relax!

I especially urge you not to let Jesus slip away from private prayer, or the reading of the Scriptures, or your intimate personal communion with Him. Make your prayers more fervent, your study of the Word more intense and real, and your daily walk with Christ more close and tender. Abide in Him! Never give Him or anyone else cause to think that you have left Him. The good soldier of Jesus Christ never has a furlough—he is like the knights of old who slept in their armor and were ready for the fray at any moment. A Christian is to always be a Christian and in every place! He may not do wrong once a year, nor once in a lifetime. What would you say to a man who told you he was only going to poison himself once? What would you think of a wife who said she was going to cease loving her husband just once? We, too, are married to Christ, so we are His and wholly His—and only His! Hold us fast, O blessed Lover of our souls, for only so can we continue to hold You fast!

V. My last injunction is this—IF YOU HAVE FOUND CHRIST, TELL OTHERS ABOUT HIM, even as Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found Him."

I have sometimes feared that some professing Christians fancy that they are to keep Christ all to themselves. They seem to have an idea that Heaven is just—

"A little spot enclosed by Grace"—

where only they and a small select company of like-minded persons will gain admittance! I cannot congratulate them upon harboring such a notion and I very strongly urge them to imitate the example of a man who found that he had a forged bank-note in his possession—he threw it over a hedge and ran away as fast as he could for fear anybody should think it belonged to him! Such a spirit as that seems to me to be quite contrary to the mind of Him who wept over Jerusalem and who said, "How often would I have gathered the children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!"

Have you found this great hive of honey and is it very sweet to your taste? Then tell others of it, for there is abundance for them and you, too. You are not like the poor people in a besieged city who feel that every mouthful that someone else eats leaves so much the less for them. Oh, no! There is "bread enough and to spare" in the great Father's house, so no prodigal son need perish with hunger! At the Gospel banquet you may eat as much as you want, but there will be just as much left for others.

Volume 56 9We have to deal with the God who is Infinite and Omnipotent, whose supply is inexhaustible and who will be glad and gratified as we spread far and wide the invitations to the great feast in honor of His Son! My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as you love Him, follow His blessed example by going after the lost sheep until you find them! If you had only common humanity, it ought to make you earnest in seeking to deliver others from going down to the Pit, by telling them of Him who has paid the ransom price for all who put their trust in Him! A battlefield must present a terrible sight to all who gaze upon it. I wish all those who are so eager for war could see the horrors of which we can scarcely bear to read. Yet this great London presents a still more terrible sight to those whose eyes have been opened to see sinners as they really are in the sight of God! Our streets swarm with the unregenerate! Many of you live next door to them when they are at home. Some of you live in the same house with them. Some even sleep in the same room with them. Plead for your husbands or wives, your brothers and sisters, your parents or children—and plead with them as well as for them! God forbid that you should be eternally separated from those who are so near and dear to you! Pray for them night and day! You who are the Lord's remembrancers, take no rest and give Him no rest, and give them no rest until they are saved! Next to your own relatives, plead with and for your employees, your employer, your neighbors and all with whom you come in contact! And then widen your sympathies and supplications until they shall embrace all of woman born! Remember Richard Krill's question, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing, will you let them perish?" Do not neglect the heathen abroad or the heathen at home! An earnest minister said to his people one Sabbath, "I am going, this week on a mission to the heathen." The deacons looked at one another, for the pastor had not mentioned the matter to them. And the members thought, "We are about to lose our dear minister, but whatever has made him think of going as a missionary to the heathen?" While these thoughts were passing through their minds, he quietly added, "But I am not going out of this town in order to be a missionary."

And there is no need for anybody to go out of town in order to be a missionary to the heathen! There they are, Brothers and Sisters, all around you! And you are the missionaries. There is your work—go and do it—and may God bless you in it—and so may many precious immortal souls through you be led to find Jesus and to trust in Him for salvation, for His name and mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Acts 2:1-21.

[The following Exposition is the earlier portion of the one published with Sermon #3224,

Volume 56—"REPENTANCE AND REMISSION"— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Verses 1-8. And when the day of Pentecost [See Sermons #511, Volume 9—

PENTECOST and #1783, Volume 30, also named PENTECOST—Read/download both sermons, free of

charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under Heaven. Now when this was told abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying, one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? These men, so far from being able to speak many languages, could not, by themselves, speak even one correctly! The Galileans dialect was a base degradation of the true Jewish tongue, so that the Galileans were always the subject of sneers and scoffing on account of their mispronunciation. There are several stories in the old Rabbinical writings, all intended to ridicule the Galileans—yet these men had now been taught to speak their own language perfectly and, what was still more marvelous—languages that they had never heard now came pouring forth from their lips with the greatest fluency! How wide the range of those foreign tongues was, we learn from the following verses—

9-11. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts in Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. Babel's curse was now removed—not by a reversing of God's curse, for God's curses and blessings are both like the laws of the Medes and Persians which never can be altered. Men still spoke the tongues of confusion, but the Apostles were able to speak to them all after receiving that miraculous gift of tongues. Thus was fulfilled that promise of Jesus, "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father." Christ never spoke with many tongues, nor did He enable His disciples to do so during His life on earth! But when He had gone back to

Heaven to His Father and had received gifts for men, they were enabled to do greater works than He had accomplished by His personal ministry here below.

12,13. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What means this? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine. That is to say, if a Libyan, for instance, had been listening to

Volume 56 11 one who was preaching in the language of Cappadocia, he might think that the man was merely babbling strange sounds without any meaning in them. To others, the Inspired Speech of the Apostles was only like the incoherent utterance of drunken men!

14-20. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said to them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunk as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions [See Sermon #806, Volume 14—A YOUNG MAN'S VISION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in Heaven above and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes. Doubtless this refers first to the siege of Jerusalem, when those strange portents were seen in the heavens, and afterwards to that far greater and more notable day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, when the moon shall become as blood and the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair.

21. And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. What a glorious Gospel verse this is! This is one of the great lifeboat-texts of the Bible. He who can get into this boat shall certainly sail to Glory in safety! "Whoever"—there is no exception of character, whatever his past life may have been! "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord"—here are no hard conditions—prayer, trust, confession of that trust—all these make up calling upon the name of the Lord. And whoever shall do this, not only may be but, "shall be saved." There is no perhaps, no maybe about it—"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 78

John 1,45-51 #921 - Nathanael and the Fig Tree

NATHANAEL AND THE FIG TREE

NO. 921

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 20, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of

whom Moses in the Law, and also the Prophets, wrote;

Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' Jesus saw Nathanael

coming toward Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite, indeed,

in whom is no deceit!' Nathanael said to Him, 'How do You know me?' Jesus

answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the

fig tree, I saw you.' Nathanael answered and said to Him, 'Rabbi,

You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered

and said to him, 'Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,'

do you believe? You will see greater things than these.' And He said to him,

'Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see Heaven open,

and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' "

John 1:45-51.

VERY often we address the Gospel to the chief of sinners. We believe it

to be our duty to do this with the greatest frequency. For did not our Lord, when bidding His disciples to preach the Good News in every place, use the words, "beginning at Jerusalem"? Where the chief of sinners lived, there was the Gospel first to be preached. But at the same time it would show great lack of observation if we regarded all mankind as being equally gross, open offenders against God. It would not only show a want of wisdom, but it would involve a want of truthfulness.

For though all have sinned, and deserve the wrath of God, yet all unconverted men are not precisely in the same condition of mind in reference to the Gospel. In the parable of the sower we

are taught that before the good seed fell upon the field at all, there was a difference in the various soils. Some of it was stony ground, another part was thorny, a third was trodden hard like a highway, while another plot is described by our Lord as "honest and good ground." Although in every case the carnal mind is enmity against God, yet are there influences at work which in many cases have mitigated, if not subdued, that enmity.

While many took up stones to kill our Lord, there were others who heard Him gladly. While to this day thousands reject the Gospel, there are others who receive the Word with joy. These differences we ascribe to God's prevenient Grace. We believe, however, that the subject of these differences is not aware that Grace is at work upon him—neither is it precisely Grace in the same form as saving Grace—for the soul under its power has not yet learned its own need of Christ, or the excellency of His salvation.

There is such a thing as a preparatory work of mercy on the soul, making it ready for the yet higher work of Grace, even as the plowing comes before the sowing. We read in the narrative of the creation that before the Divine voice said, "Let there be light," darkness was upon the face of the deep, yet it is added, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Even so in the darkness of human nature, whereas yet no ray of living light has shone, the Spirit of God may be moving with secret energy, making the soul ready for the hour when the true light shall shine.

I believe that in our congregations there are many persons who have been mercifully restrained from the grosser vices. They exhibit everything that is pure and excellent in moral character—they are persons who are not maliciously opposed to the Gospel and are ready enough to receive it if they did but understand it. They are even anxious to be saved by Jesus Christ, and have a reverence for His name, though as yet it is an ignorant reverence. They know so little of the Redeemer that they are not able to find rest in Him. This slenderness of knowledge is the only thing that holds them back from faith in Him.

They are willing enough to obey if they understood the command. If they had but a clear apprehension of our Lord's Person and work, they would cheerfully accept Him as their Lord and Savior. I have great hopes that the Lord of Love may guide the Word which is now to be spoken so that it may find out such persons, and may make manifest the Lord's secretly chosen ones—those prisoners of hope who pine for liberty—but know not that the Son can make them free.

O captive Soul, abhorring the chains of sin, your day of liberty is come! The Lord, the Liberator who looses the prisoners, is come at this very hour to snap your bonds!

I. In dwelling on this narrative, I shall first say a few words concerning NATHANAEL HIMSELF. We are told that he was a guileless man, "an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile." That is to say, like Jacob, "he was a plain man," and not like Esau, "a cunning hunter." Some minds are naturally serpentine, tortuous, slippery. They cannot think except in curves— their motives are involved and intricate, and they are of a double heart. These are the men who look one way and row the other. They worship the god Janus with two faces, and are of the same practice, if not of the same persuasion as the Jesuits. They cannot speak a thing plainly or look you in the face while they talk, for they are full of mental reservations and prudential cautions. They guard their speech. They dare not send abroad their own thoughts till they have mailed them up to the throat with double meanings.

Nathanael was just the very opposite of all this. He was no hypocrite and no crafty deceiver. He wore his heart upon his sleeve. If he spoke, you might know that he said what he meant and that he meant what he said. He was a childlike, simple-hearted man, transparent as glass. He was not one of those fools who believe everything. But on the other hand, he was not of that other sort of fools so much admired in these days who will believe nothing, but who find it necessary to doubt the most self-evident Truth in order to maintain their credit for profound philosophy. These "thinkers" of this enlightened age are great at quibbles, mighty in feigning or feeling mistrust concerning matters which common sense has no doubts about. They will profess to doubt whether there is a God, though that is as plain as the sun at noonday. No, Nathanael was neither credulous nor mistrustful. He was honestly ready to yield to the force of Truth. He was willing to receive testimony and to be swayed by evidence. He was not suspicious, because he was not a man who, himself, would be suspected. He was true-hearted and straightforward—a plain dealer and plain speaker. Cana had not within her gates a more thoroughly honest man. Philip seems to have known this, for he went to him directly, as to a man who was likely to be convinced and worth winning to the good cause.

In addition to being thus a simple-hearted man, Nathanael was an earnest seeker. Philip went to him because he felt that the good news would interest him. "We have found the Messiah," would be no gladsome news to anyone who had not looked for the Messiah. Nathanael had been expecting the Christ, and perhaps had so well understood Moses and the Prophets that he had been led to look for His speedy coming. The time when Messiah would suddenly come in His temple had certainly arrived, and he was day and night with prayer, like all the faithful of the ten tribes, watching and waiting for the appearing of their salvation. He had not as yet heard that the Glory of Israel had, indeed, come, but he was on the very edge of expectation.

What a hopeful state of heart is yours, my dear Hearer, if you are now honestly desirous to know the Truth, and intensely anxious to be saved by it! It is well, indeed, for you if your soul is ready, like the photographer's sensitive plate, to receive the impression of the Divine Light—if you are anxiously desiring to be informed if there is, indeed, a Savior—if there is a Gospel, if there is hope for you, if there is such a thing as purity and a way to reach it. It is well, I say, if you are anxiously and earnestly desiring to know how and when, and where—and determinately resolved, by God's Grace, that no exertion shall be spared on your part to run in the way that shall be marked out, and to submit yourself unto the will of God. This was the state of Nathanael, an honest-hearted lover of plain truth, seeking to find the Christ.

It is also true that he was ignorant up to a certain point. He was not ignorant of Moses and the Prophets, these he had well considered. But he knew not that Christ as yet had come. There was some little distance between Nazareth and Cana, and the news of the Messiah's coming had not traveled there. If it had been bad news, it would have flown on eagles' wings, but being good news its flight was slower, for few persons are so anxious to tell out the good as the evil. He had not, therefore, heard of Jesus of Nazareth till Philip came to him. And how many there are even in this country who do not know yet what the Gospel means, but are anxious to know it, and if they did but know it would receive it?

"What?" you say, "where there are so many places of worship and so many ministers?" Yes, just that. Yes, and in the very heart of our congregations and in the midst of our godly families,

ignorance has its strongholds. These uninstructed ones may be Bible readers, they may be Gospel hearers, but as yet they may not have been able to grasp the great Truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. They may never have seen what it is for Christ to stand in the sinner's place, and for that sinner, by an act of trust, to obtain the blessings which spring out of a substitutionary sacrifice. Yes, and here in this house where I have tried and labored to put the Gospel in short Saxon words and sentences that cannot be misunderstood, there may be some who are still saying, "What is this all about? I hear much of believing, but what is it? Who is this Christ, the Son of God, and what is it to be saved from sin, to be regenerated, to be sanctified? What are all these things?"

Well, dear Friend, I am sorry you should be in the dark, yet am I glad at heart, that though you do not know what I would have you know, yet you are simple-hearted, truth-loving, and sincere in your seeking. I am persuaded that light will not be denied you, you shall yet know Jesus and be known of Him.

In addition to this, however, Nathanael was prejudiced—we must modify that expression—he was somewhat prejudiced. As soon as Philip told him that he had found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, Nathanael said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Here let us remark that his prejudice is exceedingly excusable, for it arose out of the faulty testimony of Philip. Philip was a young convert. He had only found Jesus the day before, and the natural instinct of every truly gracious soul is to try and tell out the blessed things of Christ. So away went Philip to tell his friend, Nathanael. But what a many blunders he made in the telling out of the Gospel! I bless God, blundering as it was, it was enough to bring Nathanael to Christ.

But it was full of mistakes. Dear Souls, if you know only a little about Christ, and if you would make a great many mistakes in telling out that little, yet do not hold it in—God will overlook the errors and bless the Truth. Now observe what Philip said. He said, "We have found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," which was our Lord's popular name, but was in no way correct. He was not Jesus of Nazareth at all. He was not a native of Nazareth—our Lord was of Bethlehem. He had dwelt at Nazareth, certainly, but He was no more entitled to be called of Nazareth than of Jerusalem.

Then Philip said, "Son of Joseph," but He was only the reputed son of Joseph, He was in truth, the Son of the Highest. Philip gave to our Lord the common and erroneous titles which the unthinking many passed from hand to hand. He did not say, "We have found the Son of God," or "the Son of David," but yet he uttered all he knew—and that is all God expects of you or me. Oh, what a mercy it is that the imperfections of our ministry do not prevent God's saving souls by us! If it were not so, how little good would be done in the world!

Mr. John Wesley preached most earnestly one view of the Gospel, and William Huntingdon preached quite another view of it. The two men would have had a holy horror of each other and censured each other most conscientiously. Yet no rational man dares say that souls were not saved under John Wesley, or under William Huntingdon either, for God blessed them both. Both ministers were faulty, but both were sincere—and both made useful. So is it with all our testimonies. They are all imperfect, full of exaggerations of one Truth, and misapprehensions of another. But as long as we witness to the true Christ foretold by Moses and the Prophets our mistakes shall be forgiven, and God will bless our ministry, despite every flaw.

So He did with Nathanael—but Nathanael's prejudice rose out of Philip's blundering way of talking. If Philip had not said, "of Nazareth," then Nathanael would not have said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" If Philip had said that Jesus was of Bethlehem, and of the tribe of Judah, and that God was His Father, then this prejudice would never have beclouded the mind of Nathanael, and it would have been easier for him to have acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. We must, therefore, try to avoid mistakes, lest we cause needless prejudice. We should so state the Gospel that if men are offended by it, it shall be the Gospel which offends them, and not our way of putting it.

It may be that you, my Friend, are a little prejudiced against Christ's holy Gospel because of the imperfect character of a religious acquaintance, or the rough manners of a certain minister. But I trust you will not allow such things to bias you. I hope that, being candid and honest, you will come and see Jesus for yourself. Revise the report of the disciple by a personal inspection of the Master. Philip made up for his faults when he added, "Come and see." And I would try to prevent mine from injuring you by using the same exhortation—

"Come and see Jesus and His Gospel for yourself."

One other mark of Nathanael I would mention. He was in all respects a godly, sincere man, up to the measure of his light. He was not yet a Believer in Jesus, but still he was an Israelite, indeed. He was a man of secret prayer, he did not mock God as the Pharisees did by mere outward worship. He was a worshipper of God in his heart. His soul had private dealings with the God of Heaven when no eye saw him. So it is, I trust, with you, dear Hearer. You may not yet have found peace, but you do pray, you are desirous of being saved. You do not wish to be a hypocrite. You dread, above all things, falling into formality. You pray that if ever you become a Christian you may be a Christian, indeed. Such is the character I am endeavoring to find out, and if it is your character, may you get the blessing that Nathanael did.

II. Now secondly, we have seen Nathanael, let us for a moment consider NATHANAEL'S SIGHT OF JESUS. "Philip says unto him, Come and see." And so Nathanael came to see the Savior, which implies that although he was somewhat prejudiced against this new Messiah, yet he was candid enough to investigate His claims. Beloved Friend to whom I have already spoken, if you have any prejudice against the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, whether it is occasioned by your birth and education, or previous profession of some other faith, be honest enough to give the Gospel of Jesus Christ a fair hearing. You may hear it in this House of Prayer. You may read it in these pages. Do not dismiss it until you have thoroughly examined it. All that we would ask of you is now—knowing you to be honest, knowing you to be earnest—seriously sit down and weigh the Doctrines of Grace as you shall find them in the Scripture. And especially the life of Christ and the blessings which He brings to those who believe in Him.

Look these things over carefully. They will commend themselves to your conscience, for God has already prepared your conscience to judge righteously. And as you judge you will perceive a peculiar beauty and a charm about the Truths of the Gospel which will surely win your heart. Latimer had preached a sermon against the doctrines of the Gospel, and among his hearers there was a holy man who afterwards became a martyr. He thought, as he listened to Latimer, that he perceived something in his tone which showed him to be an honest opponent. Therefore he hoped that if light were brought to him he would be willing to see by it.

He sought him out, obtained an interview with him, and his explanations entirely won honest Hugh to the Reformed opinions—and you know what a valiant and popular minister of the New Covenant Latimer became. So, my honest Friend, give to the Gospel of salvation by faith in the precious blood of Jesus a fair hearing, and we are not afraid of the result.

Nathanael came to Christ, again, with great activity of heart. As soon as he was told to, "come and see," he did come and see. He did not sit still and say, "Well, if there is any light in this new doctrine, it will come to me." No, he went to it. Do not believe in any teaching which bids men sit down and find peace in the idea that they need not strive to enter in at the strait gate of Truth. No, Brethren, if Grace has ever come to you, it will arouse you from lethargy and lead you to go to Christ. And by His Grace you will be most earnest, with all the activity of your spirit, to search for Him as for hidden treasure. It is a delightful thing to see a soul on the wing.

The majority of our population are, as regards religion, down on the ground and unwilling to rise. They are indifferent to spiritual Truth. You cannot get them to give earnest heed to eternal matters. But once get a mind on the wing with a holy earnestness and solemn thoughtfulness, and we do believe, with God's Grace, that it will, before long, be brought to a saving faith in Christ. "Come and see," said Philip, and come and see Nathanael did. He does not appear to have expected to be converted to Christ by what he saw with his natural eyes—his judgment was formed from a mental view of Him.

It is true he saw the Person of the Messiah, but he did not expect to see in the human form any lineaments that might guide his judgment. He waited until the lips of the Messiah had spoken, and then, when he had seen the Omniscience of that mysterious Person, and how He could read his thoughts and spy out his secret actions, then he believed. Now I fear some of you live in darkness because you are expecting some kind of physical manifestation. You hope for a vivid dream, or some strange feeling in your flesh, or some very remarkable occurrence in your family. Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe.

But a saving sight of Christ is another matter! Truth must impress your mental faculties, enlighten your understanding, and win your affections. The Presence of Christ on earth is a spiritual one, and you will come to see Him not with these mortal optics just now, but with the eyes of your soul. You will perceive the beauty of His Character, the majesty of His Person, the all-sufficiency of His Atonement. And as you see these things the Holy Spirit will lead you to believe in Him and live. I pray God that such a sight as this may be vouchsafed to every honest seeker who may hear or read these words. III. A far greater matter now demands our attention—CHRIST'S SIGHT OF NATHANAEL. As soon as Jesus saw the man, He said, "Behold an Israelite, indeed," which shows us that Christ Jesus read Nathanael's heart. I do not suppose that our Lord had ever seen Nathanael with His own human eyes. But yet He understood Nathanael's character—not because He was a great judge of physiognomy and could perceive at once that He had a simple-hearted man before Him. But because He was Nathanael's Creator, being the searcher of hearts and the trier of the reins, He could read Nathanael as readily as a man reads a book which is open before his eyes.

He saw at once all that was within the enquirer, and pronounced a verdict upon him that he was free from falsehood. And then to prove to Nathanael still further how clearly He knew all about him, He mentioned a little incident which I cannot explain, nor can you, nor do I suppose anybody could

have explained it except Nathanael and Jesus—a special secret known only to them both. He said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." What he was doing under the fig tree we may guess, but we cannot know to a certainty. Perhaps it would be true of all to believe that the fig tree was to Nathanael what the Hermonites and the hill Mizar had been to David.

David says, "I will remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar." What were those sacred recollections he does not tell us, and although we can form a shrewd guess, David and his God, alone, knew the full mystery. So between Christ and Nathanael there was a common knowledge connected with that fig tree which we cannot hope to discover. And the moment our Lord mentioned that hallowed spot, its remembrances were to Nathanael so secret and so sacred that he felt that the Omniscient One was before him. Here was evidence which he could not doubt for an instant, for one of the most private and special secrets of his life, which he had never whispered into any human ear, had been brought up as by a talismanic sign. A red-letter day in his private diary had been revived by the mention of the fig tree, and He who could touch so hidden a spring in his soul must be the Son of God.

But what was Nathanael doing under the fig tree, according to our best surmise? Well, as devout Easterns are accustomed to have a special place for prayer, this may have been a shadowy fig tree under which Nathanael was accustomed to offer his devotions. And perhaps just before Philip came to him, he may have been engaged in personal and solitary confession of sin. He had looked round the garden and fastened the gate that none might come in—and he had poured into the ear of his God some very tender confession under the fig tree shade. When Christ said to him, "When you were under the fig tree," it brought to his recollection how he poured out his broken and his contrite spirit, and confessed sins unknown to all but God. That confession, it may be, the very look of Christ brought back to his remembrance and the words and look together seemed to say, "I know your secret burden, and the peace you found in rolling it upon the Lord." He felt, therefore, that Jesus must be Israel's God. It is very possible that in addition to his confession, he had under the fig tree made a deliberate investigation of his own heart. Good men generally mingle with their confessions self-examination. There it may be that this man who was free from guile had looked into the tendencies of his nature and had been enabled with holy surprise to see the fountains of the great deep of his natural depravity. He may have been taken, like Ezekiel, from chamber to chamber to see the idols in his heart, beholding greater abominations than he suspected to be there—and there humbled before the Lord. Beneath that fig tree he may have cried with Job, "I abhor myself in dust and ashes." This, also, Jesus had seen.

Or under the fig tree he may have been engaged in very earnest prayer. Was that fig tree to Nathanael what Peniel was to Jacob, a spot where he had wrestled till the break of day, pleading with God to fulfill His ancient promise, to send the Promised One who should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people, Israel? Was it so? We think it probable. That fig tree had been to him a Bethel, no other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven.

And what if we should suggest that, perhaps in addition to his prayer, Nathanael had vowed some solemn vow under the fig tree—if the Lord would but appear and give to him some sign and token for good, then he would be the Lord's and spend and be spent for Him? If the Lord would but send the Messiah, he would be among His first followers. If he would but speak to him by an angel or

otherwise, he would obey the voice. Jesus now tells him that he shall see angels ascending and descending. And reveals Himself as the Messiah to Whom he had solemnly pledged himself. It may he so.

Once more, it may be that under that fig tree he had enjoyed the sweetest communion with his God. Beloved Friends, do you not remember well, certain hallowed spots? I have one or two in my own life too sacred to mention. If my memory should forget all the world besides, yet those spots will evermore be green in my memory—the truly holy place where Jesus, my Lord, has met with me and showed me His love. One time it was "the King has brought me into His chambers." Another time I got me to "the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense." Once He said, "Come, My Beloved, let us go forth into the field. And let us lodge in the villages," and another time He changed the scene and said, "Come with Me from Lebanon, My Spouse. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Hermon, from the lions dens, from the mountains of the leopards."

Have we not sometimes had special festivals when He has broached the spiced wine of His pomegranate? When our joy has been almost too much for the frail body to endure, for our joyous spirit, like a sharp sword, has well-near cut through its scabbard? Ah, it is sweetly true. He has baptized us in the fire of His love, and we shall forever remember those secret spots, those dear occasions. This, then, was a token, a secret token between Christ and Nathanael, by which the disciple recognized his Divine Friend and future Master and Lord. He had met the Messiah in spirit before, and now he meets Him in very flesh and blood. And by this token does he know Him. In spirit the Lord set His seal upon Nathanael's heart, and now, by the sacred signet, the Israelite discerns his King. Thus we see the Lord had seen Nathanael in his previous engagements, before he became actually a Believer in Jesus. This fact suggests that each of you who have been sincerely seeking to be set right, and to know the Truth, have been fully perceived in all your seeking and desires by the God of Grace. When you let fall a tear because you could not understand the Word, Jesus saw that tear. When you groaned because you could not get satisfaction of heart, He heard that groan. Never true heart seeks Christ without Christ's being well aware of it. Well may He know of it, for every motion of a trembling heart towards Himself is caused by His own love.

He is drawing you, though you perceive not the hands of a man which encircle you. He is the hidden loadstone by which your heart is moved. I know it is night with you, and you grope like a blind man for the wall. But if your heart says, "O that I could but embrace Him! O that He were mine! If I could but find rest in Him, I would give all that I have." Then be assured that Jesus is close to you—your prayers are in His ear, your tears fall upon His heart. He knows all about your difficulties, all about your doubts and fears, and He sympathizes in the whole—and in due time He will break your snares, and you shall yet, with joy, draw water out of the wells of salvation.

This Truth is full of consolation to all who seek with sincerity, though as yet in the dark. Before the minister's voice spoke to you—when you were under the fig tree, when you were by the bedside, when you were in that inner chamber, when you were down in that saw pit, when you were in the hayloft, when you were walking behind the hedge in the field— Jesus saw you. He knew your desires, He read your longings, He saw you through and through. Even from of old He has known you.

IV. So we have seen Nathanael's sight of Christ, and then Christ's sight of Nathanael. Now the fourth thing is, NATHANAEL'S FAITH. I must go over much the same ground again under this head. Nathanael's faith— note what it was grounded on. He cheerfully accepted Jesus as the Messiah, and the ground of his acceptance lay in this—Jesus had mentioned to him a peculiar incident in his life which he was persuaded no one could have known but the Omniscient God. He concluded, therefore, Jesus to be the Omniscient God, and accepted Him at once as his King. This was very frequently the way in which persons were brought to confidence in Christ.

The same thing is recorded in this very Gospel a few chapters further on. The Lord sat down on the well and talked to the Samaritan woman, and there was no kind of impression produced upon her until He said, "You have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband." Then it flashed upon her, "This stranger knows my private history! Then He is something more than He appears to be. He is the Great Prophet." And away she ran with this on her tongue, because it was in her heart, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

The same was the case with Zaccheus. You may think, however, that this mode of conversion was confined to the days of our Lord's flesh, and the age of miracles, but it is not so. The fact is that at this very day the discovery of the thoughts of men's hearts by the Gospel is still a very potent means in the hands of the Holy Spirit of convincing them of the Truth of the Gospel. How often have I heard enquirers say, "It seemed to me, Sir, as if that sermon was meant for me. There were points in it which were so exactly like myself, that I felt sure someone had told the preacher about me. And there were words and sentences so peculiarly descriptive of my private thoughts, that I was sure no one but God knew of them. I perceived that God was in the Gospel speaking to my soul."

Yes, and it always will be so. The is the great revealer of secrets. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jesus Christ in the Gospel knows all about your sins, all about your seeking, all about the difficulties which you are meeting with. This ought to convince you that the Gospel is Divine, since its teachings lay bare the heart, and its remedies touch every spiritual disease. The knowledge of human nature displayed in the simplest passage of the Gospel is more profound than the productions of Plato or Socrates. The Gospel, like a silken thread, runs through all the windings and twisting of human nature in its fallen state. O that its voice may come home personally to you! May it, by the Spirit, convict you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment—and bring you to lay hold on eternal life!

Nathanael's faith, it must be mentioned, was peculiar not only in its ground, but in its clear and comprehensive character. He accepted Jesus at once as the Son of God. He was Divine to him, and he adored Him. He also accepted Him as the King of Israel. He was a royal personage to him, and he tendered Him his homage. May you and I receive Jesus Christ in this way, as a real Man, but yet certainly God—a Man who was despised and rejected, but yet the Man anointed above His Brethren—who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

I admire Nathanael's faith, again, because it was so quick, unreserved, and decisive. "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Christ was glorified by the decision, the quickness of this faith. Delay in believing Him dishonors Him. O honest Heart, O sincere Mind, pray that you may as quickly come into the light and liberty of true belief! May the Holy Spirit work in you a ready

satisfaction in the atoning sacrifice and Divine Person of the ever blessed Immanuel.

V. This brings us to the last point of consideration. We have shown you Nathanael and his sight of Christ, and Christ's sight of him. And then the faith that Nathanael received. Now notice NATHANAEL'S AFTER-SIGHT. Some persons want to see all that there is in Christianity before they can believe in Jesus, that is to say, before they will go to the primary school they must clamor for a degree at the university. Many want to know the ninth of Romans before they have read the third of John. They are all for understanding great mysteries before they understand that primary simplicity, "Believe and live."

But those who are wiser and, like Nathanael, are content to believe at first what they are able to perceive, namely, that Christ is the Son of God and the King of Israel, shall go on to learn more. Let us read our Lord's words, "You shall see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter shall you see Heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." To full grown disciples Jesus promises, "Greater things than these shall you do." To young converts He says, "Greater things than these shall you see."

He gives promises in proportion to our ability to receive them. The promise given to Nathanael was a most fitting one. He was all Israelite, indeed—then he shall have Israel's vision. What was the great sight that Israel or Jacob saw? He saw the ladder whereon angels ascended and descended. Precisely this shall Nathanael see. He shall see Jesus Christ as the communication between an opened Heaven and a blessed earth—and he shall see the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man!

If you bear the character of Israel, you shall enjoy the privileges of Israel. If you are an Israelite, indeed, you shall have the blessing that made Israel glad. Nathanael had owned Jesus as the Son of God—here he is told that he shall see Him in His glory as the Son of Man. Note that last word of the chapter. It is not so much that Christ humbly called Himself the Son of Man—though that is true—but that to see the glory of Christ as God is a simple thing. To see and understand the glory of Christ as Man, this is a sight for faith, and probably a sight which, so far as our senses are concerned, is reserved for the day of His coming.

When He shall appear—the very Man that suffered upon Calvary— when He shall appear upon the Great White Throne to judge the quick and the dead, if you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, you shall yet see Him in His glory as Man swaying the universal scepter, and enthroned as King of all the earth. He had called Jesus the King of Israel, if you remember. Now he is to see his Lord as the King of the angels—to see the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him. Believe, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as far as you know Him, and you shall know more of Him. Open your eyes but to the candle light of the Law, and you shall soon behold the sunlight of the Gospel. The Lord is very gracious to fulfill the Gospel rule, "To him that has, shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

If you acknowledge the King of Israel, you shall see Him as the Lord of Hosts before whom archangels veil their faces, and to Whom seraphim are servitors. The great sight, I suppose, Nathanael saw as the result of his faith was not the transfiguration, nor the ascension as some suppose, but a spiritual view of Christ in His mediatorial capacity as the great link between earth and Heaven. This is, indeed, a sight transcending all others. We are not divided from the invisible.

We are not separated from the infinite. The mortal has communion with the Immortal. The sinner speaks with the Holy One—prayers climb up to Heaven, and benedictions descend by way of the Great Substitute.

Can you see this, O Soul? If so, the sight will make you glad. You are not exiled now, you are only at the foot of the stairs which lead to the upper chamber of your Father's House. Your God is above and bright spirits traverse constantly the open gangway of the Mediator's Person. Here is joy for all the saints—for this ladder can never be broken—our communion is abiding. No doubt, to Nathanael's view, the promise would be fulfilled as he perceived the Providence of God as ruled by Christ Jesus who orders all things for the good of the Church. Was not this intended in the figure of angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, that is, all agencies, whether living or material, all subject to the Law and the dominion of Christ?

So that all things work together for good to them that love God! Do not go fretting to your homes and say, "Here are new doctrines springing up, and new gods that our fathers knew not, and ministers are slipping aside from the faith, and bad days have fallen upon the Church, and Romanism is coming up, and infidelity with it." All this may be true—but it does not matter one fig—for God has a great end in view. He has a bit for the mouth of leviathan. He can do as He wills with His most powerful enemies. He rides upon the wings of cherubs and rules the storm. The clouds are but the dust of His feet. Never believe that Providence is out of joint. The wheels of this great engine may revolve some this way and some that, but the sure result will be produced, for the great Artist sees the final result to be secure.

God's glory shall arise from it all! Angels descend, but they as much do the will of God as those which ascend. Some events seem disastrous, and even calamitous. But they shall all, in the end, prove to be for the best. For he —

"From seeming evil still educes good,"

And better still, and better still—in infinite progression. Until the crown shall come upon the head of Him who was separated from His Brethren, and all the glory shall roll in waves of mighty song at the foot of His Throne, may you and I continue to see this great sight more and more clearly. Until the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel, and the voice of God, and once and for all we shall see Heaven and earth blended, may we continue to see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

All this matchless glory will come to us through that little window by which we first saw the Savior. If we will not see Him as our Lord until we can see all the future, we shall perish in darkness. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established. But if, with simple and true hearts you have been seeking Jesus, and now come and accept Him as the Lord, the King of Israel—then greater things than these shall be in store for you! Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off.

And the day of His pompous appearing, when Heaven and earth shall hang out their streamers for overflowing joy because the King has come unto His own. And the day the crown is put upon the head of the Son of David—then shall you see it and see it all—for you shall be with Him where He is, that you may behold His glory, the glory which the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world. Come Lord Jesus! Come quickly!

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Chapter 79

John 1,47 #2068 - Nathanael--The Man Needed for th

NATHANAEL—THE MAN NEEDED

FOR THE DAY

NO. 2068

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1885.

"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

John 1:47.

THIS morning we had a "behold"—a behold about a new convert. "Be

hold, he prays!" It seemed to me most suitable to occupy the evening with another "behold"—a behold about another new convert who is just having his eyes opened to see the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and to become His disciple. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" When Jesus says "Behold!" we may be sure that there is something worth seeing. A man in whom is no deceit is so rare a person nowadays that we ought not to grudge an evening for such a sight. We are always beholden to a man who enables us to see an honest man—such a man is one of the noblest works of God and will reward our observation. Diogenes looks for an honest man with a lantern. But Jesus finds him.

I shall not go into the full meaning of what "an Israelite indeed," is, but I shall dwell, principally, upon the fact that Nathanael was a man with no deceit in him. The Lord Jesus Christ made that discovery. And who so fit to spy out a man in whom was no deceit—as the Christ in whom there is no deceit? Two guileless men were that day together, for in our Lord Jesus there is neither guilt nor deceit. In us there is guilt but we trust that by Divine Grace deceit has been cast out of us. It will be so if the Lord does not impute iniquity to us, according to the words of David, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit." The Lord is sure to put all deceit out of us when He removes all guilt from us.

Men generally see what they are. And because Christ has no deceit, therefore He spies out the man with no deceit in his heart and at once commends him and welcomes him and says, "Behold," as if delighted and charmed to see him. The Lord Jesus appreciates the sincerity which He perceives in Nathanael. I am afraid that a man without deceit is not much esteemed by the ordinary run of mankind. He will be wise, however, not to trouble himself about that matter. The

approbation of Jesus is better than the approbation of the whole world. They say of a man nowadays who has no deceit, "Well, he is a very simple-minded kind of fellow. Exceedingly good, but rather blunt. Quite unsuspicious and therefore you may readily take him in."

Mark you, there is no reason why a man without deceit should be taken in. For while we are harmless as doves we can also be wise as serpents if we are rightly taught. But in the ordinary way, a man that is not crafty and cunning—a man that speaks his mind and practices no policy and is not acquainted with tricks and shifts—is thought to be a poor creature by the wise and deceitful men of this day. But if Jesus Christ takes delight in a guileless man, the guileless man may be perfectly satisfied with this high measure of acceptance. God grant to each one here present, man and woman, that we all may be found free from deceit!

I am going to speak upon the text in two ways. First, here is a happy sign in a seeker of Christ—a man in whom there is no deceit. And secondly, here is a vital point about a Believer in Christ—about the man who has passed the stage of seeking and has become a Believer. He must have in his spirit no deceit. It is vital to him that it should be sincere and straightforward.

I. Here, first, we clearly see A HAPPY SIGN IN A SEEKER—he is a man in whom is no deceit. We were talking, some time ago—a few of us ministers of Christ who have been familiar with the souls of men for years—and I made a remark that seemed to startle my Brethren. The remark was this—although I had spoken with thousands of men and women who had been converted and I had seen persons brought to Christ of every age and of every character, yet I scarcely remembered the conversion of a man who was double-minded, crafty, false, deceitful.

Of course, God's Grace is sovereign and God chooses whomsoever He wills and He does not choose according to human merit. But it is very singular that of the ground which is mentioned in the parable, which brought forth fruit to the Divine Sower, it is said that it was "honest and good ground." By this was not intended any spiritual grace, nor even any moral virtue of high degree in the condition of the persons who received the Gospel. But there was sincerity about the people so described—they were honest, straight, unsophisticated and free from subtlety and cunning. It is in the honest heart that sowing Truth takes root.

I have known the drunkard saved. Blessed be God for that! I have seen the swearer have his mouth washed so that he has spoken sweet and goodly words for the rest of his life. I have known the fornicator and adulterer and the harlot delivered from the Stygian ditch of abominable lust. I have known men guilty of almost every sin delivered from the power of evil. And concerning all these, the living evidence of holy conduct has proved their sincerity beyond all question. But I still say that my memory does not bring before me a single person habitually guilty of the doubleshuffle, habitually a liar, habitually a cheat, converted to God at all. The insincere, the canting, the hypocritical, the habitually deceptive—I know not of converts from these classes.

There may have been such and I should not wonder if there have been. But I do not happen to have met with them. The most of the converted people I have seen have been straightforward and true after a way. They might curse and swear, they might deny the Gospel, they might occasionally lie under strong pressure or from sheer flippancy. They might commit all manner of criminalities but as a rule, there they were and you could see them to be what they were. They were bad fellows, enough, but they did not dissemble—they sinned most grievously but they never

pretended to be saints. Such were the men that Christ converted. Such was Paul, of whom we spoke this morning—intensely earnest and honest in all that he did—even when he persecuted the saints of God.

It seems to me that often in the man who is filled with deceit there is a want of something for the Grace of God to work upon. When this creature repents it is only a skin-deep business—his heart is never wounded. When he believes something you do not know that he believes it. His faith is no better than another's unbelief. He begins at once putting another meaning on what he professes to believe—you cannot hold such an eel. If anything comes home to his feelings, he has such a very minute conscience left that there is no room for conviction to light upon, when it does pay him a visit.

He has got into such an habitual condition of cheating that he cheats himself as well as others. He cannot be true and thorough—it is not in him. When the Truth of God shines full upon his face he does not openly pull down the blind to shut out the light—he talks about how delightful it is and yet manages to shut his eyes to it. He praises the Truth of God but he does not love it. He is a lover of the Gospel in words but he cunningly spreads abroad sentiments which undermine it. I am sick of such men and yet they are not hard to find. We have all around us the hollowness which would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect.

There is scarcely anything under Heaven so damnable as deceit, deceit and craft. The ingrained deceiver is capable of everything evil and incapable of anything good. Out of that kind of man the devil manufactures his chief instruments. Traitors like Judas Iscariot are carved out of the ebony of deceit. I say, again, that it is horribly difficult for any of these people ever to be converted and it seldom happens that they are. They may get into the Church even like Ananias and Sapphira, but they have to be carried as corpses outside of her—such a dishonor are they to the company of God's people.

The man of whom we have great hope is one in whose spirit there is no deceit. Now I will show you the sort of man he is. He is one who, when he is spoken to about Christ, has difficulties but in his difficulties he is honest. Nathanael is told by his friend Philip that he has found the Messiah. Nathanael enquires, "Where did you find Him?" Why, He comes from Nazareth! "Well," says he, "but can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Now, when a man will plainly state his objection, his friend can do his best to meet it and to answer it with some such word as, "Come and see."

Around us are a number of persons who object to our Lord. But the objections which they mention are not their real objections. Their pretended difficulties are a red-herring—to turn the scent from their real reasons for opposition. Many scorn Christ because they do not want to give up their sin. They pick up some technical question—some difficulty raised by geology or evolution, or something or other and they make a fuss over it— while the real impediment is that they are living an unclean life and do not want to give up their evil ways. The difficulty is that they are making gain in a wrong way and to be Christians would not suit their pockets, for they would have to quit a bad trade, or conduct their business with less profits. There is where the true difficulty lies. But they do not care to mention the real impediment, and therefore they pretend that they are the victims of some awful mystery or terrible dogma which frightens them out of their salvation. We know the bugbears which these deceivers set up. They deceive themselves more than they deceive

anybody else. He is the sincere seeker who does not play at sham difficulties but who speaks out at once and tells his friend what the point is that hinders him.

Of the man in whose spirit there is no deceit, we may also say that, as a seeker, he is also candid—he is willing to examine. Consequently, like Nathanael when Philip said, "Come and see," he does come and see for himself and he examines on his own account to see if it is so. Oh, if half the people that object to the Gospel would but read the Bible for themselves they would not object any longer! Few people nowadays care to read solidly good books. But when they do so they are usually greatly the better for it. I saw a young Brother last Friday and in answer to the question, "How were you converted?" he said, "It was through reading Luther."

I was somewhat surprised and I said, "Luther? What book of Luther?" "I read Luther on the Galatians." "You did? I am glad to see the man that reads Luther on the Galatians." He was a young man employed in the city and I admired him for preferring Luther to the wretched novels of the period. "I read it two or three times," he said, "and I saw the difference between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. I saw how man was ruined by his works and how he must be saved by faith and I found the Savior while reading that book." I was delighted with the young man and I feel persuaded that one day we shall hear of him in another capacity.

Oh, if people would but read the Bible and books about the Bible which explain the Gospel with the desire to know what the Gospel is, they would find Him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write! Alas, men do not find Jesus, for there is deceit in their spirit and they do not desire to find Him. They do not want to know and so they reMal. ignorant. They do not want to discover and so do not discover. In the Last Great Day, when that curtain shall be drawn back which hides from our eyes all souls that are lost—if we are permitted to look into that dreadful place—we shall not find there a soul that ever sincerely cried to God for mercy through Jesus Christ.

Nor do I think that we shall find one who searched the Scriptures and heard the Gospel with the desire to find Christ. Hell is filled through that deceitfulness of the natural heart which will not let them receive Jesus and His salvation. They blind their own eyes to the light of God. Happy is the pastor to whom enquirers state their difficulties honestly and who can persuade them to examine the subject about which they are in doubt!

Now, dear Friends, a man who is really free from deceit in his heart—a downright, upright, straightforward man—is open and ready for the work of God's Holy Spirit. For instance, such a man is open to conviction. When he reads the Bible or hears a sermon, he says, "I desire to know all about it." Tell me the Truth of God, however unpleasant it may be. He does not want the preacher to flatter him. Some do, you know. They must have very pretty words spoken about the dignity of human nature, the universal Fatherhood of God, the almost unavoidable character of sin and the hopeful destiny of universal manhood or else their proud hearts sneer at the preacher.

But the man in whose spirit there is no deceit loves best the preacher who uses the surgeon's knife without partiality and cuts down to the root of the cancer. "No," says he, "I did not come here to be fooled and amused. I want to know about that which concerns my soul for life and for death and to know the truth of it." Such a man is open to conviction. He has laid aside prejudice. He does not dictate to the minister of God but he is ready to hear all the Truth and to feel the power of the message if it is, indeed, from God. He is ready to confess his sin when he finds that he has broken

the Law of God. When he perceives that the Law deals with thoughts and words and deeds. When he sees how wide its range is, so as to take in every action of this mortal life, he is ready to bow his head and say, "I am a sinner. God be merciful to me a sinner."

The man who is crafty and double-minded will not do that—indeed, it is the last thing he cares to do. He begins excusing himself in some fashion or other. He is no worse than other people. He was misled by others. He could not help it. Everybody else did it. He only followed his natural passions and he could not help his constitutional inclinations. It was his fate to do it. He had intended to do better but was overcome. These are a few of the forms of the shuffling of deceit. If the man were an honest man he would say, "Yes, it is so. I broke the Law and did wrong. I am not going to dispute the question. I am forced to plead guilty. And if you condemn me, O my God, You will do no more than is just." That is the kind of man who, before long, will find salvation and enter into peace with God.

This is the man who lies open also to the power of the Holy Spirit in reference to conversion. You have proved to him that he is wrong and with his whole heart he desires to turn from evil. Show him his mistake and he will be eager to redress it. His honest soul will not rest in wrong-doing. Look at the Apostle Paul before his conversion. He is a desperate Pharisee and a furious persecutor. He tears along like a wild horse in his mad career of self-righteousness. But he no sooner perceives that Jesus really is the Christ than he is just as intense in his attempts to make known the glory of Christ as he was before to overthrow His kingdom. He sinned through ignorance and unbelief and not from malice.

If we spoke to honest hearts at all times, we should see plentiful conversions. But, alas, "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Further than this I believe that a sincere heart, a true heart, is a great guard to a man against pretended plans of salvation. "Come here," says one, "I will prove to you salvation by works." The honest man replies, "That will not suit me. For salvation by works would require that my works should have been perfect throughout life and mine have not been so. Mine have been imperfect—are still imperfect—and will be imperfect till I die. I cannot stand on the footing of merit for an hour."

"Come," says another, "here is salvation by sincerity. Sincere obedience is the patent article by which men are saved. Do your best and be sincere and the matter is squared." But the man who is upright in heart answers, "I do not see that. Neither can I rest therein." Indeed he ought not to do so. For such a hope is based on a lie. If a man were to take poison sincerely, thinking it to be medicine, it would not cure him, but kill him. If a man most sincerely stands in the way of an express steam-engine and thinks he can stop it, it will "stop him" and his life altogether. The candid, thoughtful mind cannot believe that invention of self.

You see, the man whose heart is quite honest wants something real and solid and has no desire to arrive at an easy peace by deceitful means. Being truthful himself, he cannot bear a lie. And when somebody offers him a comforting falsehood, he replies, "I cannot be comforted except by the Truth of God. I will not let my conscience be stayed and eased except by that which is legitimate and right. I want to be justly and truly saved and not merely tempted to believe that I am saved, when I am not."

I believe that many persons will never be a prey to priest craft, or any of the thousand inventions of mankind, because God, in great mercy, has made them men in whose spirits there is no deceit. And therefore they search after that which is true and have an inward perception of what is the Truth of God. They may be mistaken in some things and will be, for we are all fallible. But a true heart is very much like the mariner's needle which is true to its own pole and therefore helps a man in his steering. God grant us all to have an instinct for truth and to be led by its aid to Christ, who is the Truth, so that we may truly find Him and be saved by His great salvation.

To be free from deceit also helps us to see our need of the Spirit of God. The right-minded man who will examine himself carefully will perceive that what is required of him is more than he can ever give, unaided and unassisted. He will discover that there is that about a Christian's life to which he cannot attain unless he is born again. He will feel that there is a something about the child of God which he does not possess and cannot imitate and can only gain by a work of the Spirit of God in the heart.

Brethren, a man whose heart has been made to be true—even though as yet he may not have found Christ—is one of those men who are pretty sure to find Him. He is on the outlook for such a Savior as Christ, and therefore he will spy Him out when He passes by. To such men I like to tell the story of substitution—how a just God cannot pass by sin without a penalty. How that just God, in the Person of His Son, came here on earth and took human nature into connection with His own. How in that perfect Manhood He took the sins of all who believe in Him and bore them in His own body on the tree. That, by bearing what was due to the dishonored Law, He might put away sin, so "that God might be just and the Justifier of him that believes."

Why, I have seen true hearts leap at this. They have said, "Yes, that is the secret—that is the solution of the dread problem of my conscience. I see now how righteousness and peace can kiss each other—how an offending sinner can meet his offended God—how they can justly stand on terms of mutual amity and love. The sinner washed in the atoning blood and God rejoicing in the sinner as He sees him in the righteousness of His dear Son." The truthfulness which God puts into men's hearts seems, somehow, to open wide the doors of the understanding and the entrances of the entire being to the glories of the Cross of Christ. And Jesus enters— the Truth and the Life—and takes possession of that honest spirit and dwells there to the salvation of the sinner, world without end. Now, if any man or woman here is resolved to come to Jesus, let them carry out the resolve. Come along with you! The true Savior shuts out no true man. If you mean to pray tonight, pray. If your heart means the prayer, God will hear it. O my Hearer, if you will turn from your sin in real earnest, God will help you and enable you to overcome your sin. If you will give yourself up to Jesus Christ at once—not in words but from your very soul—He will receive you and save you. Let there be no trifling, no mocking God. No stopping to talk with a Christian friend to chat away your feelings with pious words. But come as you are! Only come really and truly and Jesus will meet you and welcome you and say, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Those who come thus are always welcomed by Him. Come and see for yourself!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to give a picture of A SINCERE MAN AFTER HE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN. It is the sine qua non for a Christian that he should be thoroughly sincere. Of every man who is really a child of God it must be said—or we shall question whether he is a child of God at all—"an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Just let me briefly state how the true Christian's

portrait is here painted in life—like colors in the words, "in whom is no deceit."

First, the real Believer in Christ desires to be what he thinks he is. That is to say, if he judges himself to be converted he desires to be soundly converted. If he judges himself to be a Believer, his desire is that he may not be anything else than a true Believer. If upon examination he perceives that he is regenerate, his prayer is that there may be no mistake about it, but that he may be really born again from on high. Some people do not like to be examined on these points but the genuine Christian loves to be searched and tested.

He prays, "Search me, O God." Because searching by his own conscience may not be enough. He asks God Himself to search and test him whether he is true or not. It would be an awful thing if you or I should form the comforting conclusion, "I am all right, for I am in the light!"—and it should turn out that we are abiding in death and darkness. It would be an awful thing to find out that terrible truth just when we are in the valley of death and wading through the dread river. Let us find it out at once, if we must find it out at all! Startling as the discovery would be to some of us, yet we would rather know it now than go an inch further—for every inch we go, we are further away from the right road, if we are on the wrong track.

I heard of one who got into the backwoods and went traveling on all day long and at nightfall he discovered that after the most weary plodding he had arrived at the exact place from which he started in the morning. He had been wandering in a circle and spending his strength for nothing. It is a fearful business, when one is starving, to be at the same time losing one's way. We pray that it may not be so with us. We wish to be what we think ourselves to be. We want to carry out to the full any profession that we may have made—we desire to go beyond it rather than fall short of it.

And, next, every true Christian desires to do what he thinks he does. You will understand me when I say that when we go upstairs to pray, if we are true Christians, we shall want to feel that we really pray. For there may be times when we have not prayed at all, though we have been on our knees and have repeated very excellent words. When you read the Bible you know well that there is no practical good in getting through a chapter of the Bible any more than a passage of any other book if the heart has not received the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

John Bradford vowed that he would never leave off a holy exercise until he felt that his heart had entered into it. He resolved that if he sang, he would sing until he did sing. If he prayed, he would pray until he did pray. If he heard the Word, he would hear it until he did hear it, so as to profit by it. But O dear Friends, how easy it is to fall into the hypocritical cant of talking and not doing, doing and half-doing and flattering ourselves that we have done it when, indeed, we have only talked of doing it! Let us be straight and sincere. If you have given alms, take heed that you have given alms—and not spent your money in buying for yourself a name for generosity.

If you preach the Gospel, mind you have preached it—and have not merely played the orator and aimed at being thought a man of admirable parts. If you have engaged in public prayer, let it never be merely because you were called upon by the leader of the meeting. But let it be a prayer in which you breathe out a burning desire to speak with God. When you plead on behalf of your Brethren, do not compel them to think of you. But lead them to the Mercy Seat. Let us cultivate a spirit in which there is no deceit. If you have had a quarter of an hour for prayer and you have not prayed, rather mark it down as a wasted quarter of an hour than reckon it a season of devotion. It

will never answer to keep false accounts with the Lord.

If you have been reading the Bible and you really have not read it and have got nothing out of it, do not say that you have read it—just say I pretended to do so. That is the honest way. Be very straight with yourself, for he must be a great knave who is willing to cheat his own soul. If you are not very watchful and severe with yourself, you may be giving your heart and your life credit for things which are but the names of things and not the things themselves.

The Christian man in whom there is no deceit is true to his convictions. This is an age in which convictions are sadly rare and where they do exist they are singularly sleepy and torpid. I take it, as a Christian man and minister, that I have no right to occupy the pulpit of a congregation if I do not believe those doctrines which I professed to believe when I became the pastor of the Church. I have no right to undermine the basis upon which the Church was formed. As a private member of a Church, I have no right to be a member of a Church whose doctrines I do not accept. Indeed, I ought not to regard it as a possibility that I could remain to profess what I do not agree with. I am responsible, as a member of a Church, for all that is taught and all that is done by that Church in its capacity as a Church.

And if I am protesting in my heart, and yet in my proper person continue part and parcel of that Church—I am not acting truthfully to God. We want, in this century, a class of men who are endowed with a double portion of conscience to what is generally exhibited by professors. For there are many of them who have got enough conscience to make them miserable and disagreeable but not enough to make them honestly quit their positions. They have enough conscience to make them feel uncomfortable but not enough to force them to act bravely for what they believe.

Who wants to have a conscience that will only be quiet by being drugged? Trifling with conscience, though common enough, is one of the most deadly sins against a man's self of which he can be guilty. If you are following a trade and you know that it is evil, quit it. Quit it at once. Quit it before you get comfortable in it. For after a while, by continuance in it, you will become saddened with dishonesty and you will not be able to see the dishonor of it. I do not doubt that many persons in London who get their living by the most infamous vices entered into those infamous ways by degrees. They began with some little divergence from morality and then turned decidedly into wickedness. It was a very little fault at first and it troubled them—but they soon grew used to it and said, "Oh, well, everybody does it."

Then they went on a little farther and a little farther till they were out of sight of the right road and had lost all desire to return to it. Sad is that man's case who has lost all power to hear the foghorn and yet is nearing a rock. Blessed is that man who will not listen to the common talk about making small nicks in his conscience. For he that makes a little rent will find that in the wear and tear of life those little rents soon gape wider and wider. Be true to your conscience, though it cost you your honor or your life. What if your barn is empty and your purse is taken from you? What if your reputation sinks? If you are true to God and to yourself you need not fear, for you shall have the approbation of Him who said of Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

I do not myself like the doing of things for which I have to make an apology. I do not refer to apologies to my fellow men. For what matters what people think about us? We need not mind the

judgments of erring mortals. But I refer to apologizing to myself and to my God. Every man who respects himself feels that the first thing he has to do is to deserve his own good opinion. And numbers of men and women have not won that good opinion yet. If they were to talk to themselves, they would say to themselves, "Why, you know you are not acting straight. You know you are not doing right. You are mean and cowardly and afraid to do right."

But they will not give themselves an opportunity of talking to themselves, lest they should be uneasy. He that never likes to be alone probably knows that when he is alone he is in bad company. And this fact ought to startle him. Would he be so mightily afraid to commune with his own heart in solitude if he did not suspect something to be rotten within? Never violate your convictions. If you do, you are not one in whom is no deceit.

Again, a genuine Christian man is simple in his aims. He is aiming at God's glory. He is aiming at the good of his fellow men. He is aiming to lead a holy life. That is what he says. And if he is, indeed, a child of God, he is really aiming at these things and he is not basely taking up with godliness for the sake of gain and reputation. Are not many looking one way and rowing another? Do you not know Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, who looks this way and the other way, too? He runs with the hounds when there is anything good to be hunted. But he is off with the hare when a little fear surprises him. Trimming is a despicable business—a diabolical thing and those who follow it are the worst of men. Such men are common as blackberries and base as dirt. Oh, be not so! Let your life be laid like a gun that is sighted for the center of the target and then let it be fired at once that the bullet may go straight to its place, driven on by all the powder of your energy. God give us to be like thunderbolts hurled from His own hand against all falsehood and sham. Never caring what the consequences may be—so far as we ourselves are concerned—let us be resolved that if the heavens fall we will follow the Truth of God and justice, and righteousness, and leave those whose likings run the other way to shift for themselves by trickery and policy.

The Christian man is clear in his aims, and if he is a true Christian, he is also very clear in his modes of pursuing his aims. Some people have a sort of spiritual or moral squint. If they want to look over there, they turn their eyes up this side of the gallery. They never say plainly and exactly what they mean, but use words in a double and doubtful sense. I abhor this most in a teacher of religion but it is far too common. Some preachers are great men at beating around the bush. They never go to work as a truthful man would go to work because, they say, "No, I must play my cards." Beware of all that moral card-playing. Hate the idea of playing your cards for this and that.

I do not say that you and I might wish with the Roman that we had a window in our breast, that all men might see our thoughts. For he that had a window in his breast would sometimes need to pull down the blind. But I do say this—that if we are walking as Christ would have us walk, we shall so live that our design and our mode of getting at our design will bear the test of the judgment of the Last Great Day. I say yet further that he among you who is proposing to do one thing—as his fellow man judges but who is really aiming to do another thing, as God knows—is not "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit."

Brethren, in your trade, in your business, in all that you do, be straight as a line. Policy may be a guide for the world but it should never be the rule of life of Church members. O my Brothers and Sisters, be true in all things! Do that which will bear the burning heat of the last fire and the fierce light of the last day and then you do that which you can sleep upon on your deathbed, can

remember in the Day of Judgment and remember without fear before your God. Live unto God. Live as in the sight of God. Live under the command of God. Court His approbation and care for nothing else. Set your helm towards the right course, and then fasten it there and turn not aside an inch, God helping you, all your days.

Such a man as this need never be afraid. He may live or die without apprehension. He may face any company without a blush. It is a great mercy when you do not get into the way of talking one way to one set of people and another way to another. I know some professed Christians who are so delightfully sweet and earnest that they try to make things pleasant all round and therefore never speak out the whole truth in any company—unless it happens to be such as will be agreeable. It is, "Oh, yes, my dear Sir." And though there is something hard said about an absent person they quite agree with it. When they get with that very person it is again, "Yes, my dear Sir." And they join hands with him in tearing up the character of the opposite party. This method of talking is very liable to accidents. A person who acts this double part must always live a very unquiet life because he does not know when No. 1 and No. 2 may meet and put their accounts together and find out his treachery to both parties. Brethren, let no one among you be guilty of such conduct. Always say anything you have against a man straight to his face. When you speak behind his back, speak as kindly of him as truth permits. You need not do that before his face—for that might seem flattery on your part.

To his face you may tell him a few things that do not please him, if it is just to do so. But when he is absent, be silent on such themes. Doublefacedness often brings a bitter reward in this life. Do not play the double in your conversation, either towards God or man. Be an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no deceit. Such a person who has lived honestly in the sight of God—trusting alone in the precious blood of Jesus and not to his own sincerity—need not fear in time or in eternity.

I remember seeing a good but very timorous woman whose gracious life was drawing to a close. I was sitting by her bedside and she seemed to be very low and filled with fear as to her future state. But at last she was comforted by a word I spoke. Then she said to me very tremblingly, "I do not think that God will send me among the wicked who did not love Him and did not trust His dear Son, for I never sought their company here. I have always loved the people of God and I have loved His house and I have loved His Word and I have loved holiness, and therefore I think that He will let me go among my own people."

This was sound reasoning. The true shall go with the true at the last. The man whom God has made to be upright and truthful shall not be driven down to the place where all liars go. He shall keep his own way and go to his own company. Up there in Heaven it is all Truth of God—the God of Truth is there and the Christ of Truth is there—and men are there who loved the Truth and who, despite all their imperfections, came to the light that their deeds might be made manifest that they were worked in God. If you are truthful, you will go with these truthful people. Oh, may God make you so at once!

Remember that there is an absolute necessity that a Christian should possess thoroughbred sincerity and intense, downright reality. The child of God may have spots on his countenance but he must not paint his face. It is the hypocrite that paints. There may be a speck here and a speck there upon the countenance of the true Believer but he is sorry that it should be so and he tries to wash off all such stains. But he never uses the color-box. In this he is the reverse of the world's

religious professors. Oh, the multitude of hypocrites that rouge themselves up to their eyes! They are such beauties as Jezebel made herself.

You would suppose that they possessed the beauty of holiness. But see them when the paint is off—catch them at home—watch them in their own families—trace them into their secret places and there you will say, "Can these be the same men?" When one saw a woman of eighty tricked out like a girl of eighteen, he shouted, "What old hag is this?" So might you say of many a brave professor, "What disgraceful creature is this?" That which we thought was the beauty of Divine Grace we find to be the worn and shriveled countenance of the old man hidden beneath coats of deceptive coloring. Loathe all this and be as free from it as you would wish to be free from theft or murder.

O Sirs, if any of us are lost, let us at least know that we are so. If we hope that we are saved, God grant that it may be a true hope and a vital experience. I will speak to you, one and all, the Gospel of the Grace of God and I have done. To each one the Word of the Lord says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"—saved from hypocrisy, saved from falsehood, saved from deceit and guilt—for "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." May God set His seal upon this admonition, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Writing at this present time I must personally sing of

tender mercy and restoring love. Health is returning. And if I could but gain sufficient strength to stand through a sermon, I would come home at once. Morning by morning my knee becomes just a little better and therefore I look forward with joyful hope to a return to my pulpit from which I have been so long absent. If I may be favored to preach on February 17th, I shall be happy, indeed.

The last few months have been crowded with more trials than it would be worthwhile to mention. But in nothing has Divine Grace failed to support the struggling heart. More sure than ever am I of the Truth of the Gospel, the faithfulness of God and the certainty of His purpose. The Lord lives when comfort dies and reigns when nature fails. Not a line of His Revelation has proved erroneous. There is not a syllable of the inspired Book which has ever started from its place. You may hang the weight of your soul on any one of the Words which have proceeded out of the mouth of God. This I have proved by personal experience time out of mind.

Although I am not worthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, I yet most boldly ask the prayers of my fellow workers that I may not, upon this occasion, be disappointed, but may be allowed to rise from pain and return to my happy sphere of service. I beg this specially of choice friends, to whose intercessions I already owe so much. Yours heartily, C. H. SPURGEON. Mentone, January 26, 1889.

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

Chapter 80

John 1,50 #2021 - Nathanael--Or-the Ready Believe

NATHANAEL—OR, THE READY BELIEVER

AND HIS REWARD

NO. 2021

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under

the fig tree, you believe? You shall see greater things than these."

John 1:50.

NATHANAEL was by nature a man free from cunning and deceit. He was a specimen of that "honest and good ground" of which our Savior speaks in the parable, upon which, when the seed fell, a hundred-fold harvest was produced. We have some such men about us, thank God, in this country—regular John Blunts, as we say, clear as crystal, true as the sun in the heavens. Many men are well known to us who are upright, downright, truthful, honest, candid and openhearted. You might trust them anywhere. Yes, trust them to repeat a conversation without misrepresenting it and that is saying a good deal in these times.

Such people do not understand the clever arts of craft and cunning for they do not take to them naturally and have never been trained in the practice of policy. Speech is not to them the medium for concealing their thoughts. When they have a mind to speak, they speak their mind. You know where they are. They may have a great many faults but they have not the faults of deception and dissimulation. They are Israelites, indeed, in whom is no guile. You know the kind of people—they may at times speak too harshly and hurt your feelings. They may put things in an ugly shape and tread on people's corns—but they are as straight as a plumbline and you may be sure that you know them when you have heard what they say.

In the end they cause far less pain to people's feelings than those who have a great deal of finesse and policy, whose words are softer than butter but inwardly they are drawn swords. Smooth and oily tongues, with lying hearts at the back of them are fit instruments for Satan. But truthspeaking lips, which are joined to an honest heart are precious things which the Lord Himself delights to use. Now, when the good Brethren who had joined the Savior came to tell Nathanael that they had found the Christ he blurted out his objection at once.

They said, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." But he did not take everything for Gospel which his friends told him. Nathanael had been born and bred in the midst of people prejudiced against Nazareth and he had sucked in their prejudice and felt sure that the Messiah could no more come from Nazareth than a profound

philosopher could come from Gotham. He does not beat about the bush but he says at once, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

It is always a good thing, when a man has a prejudice, if he will but state it and "out" with it. You can always deal with this kind of fellow. If he will say what is troubling him and tell you what keeps him back from faith, why, then you can put your finger on his difficulty and try to remove it. It is a great miracle when a dumb devil is cast out. If the evil will but speak and so declare itself we have a chance of overcoming it.

Nathanael's question was met at once by his comrades, who said to him, "Come and see." And like the honest man that he was, he took up their challenge. He would "come and see." How many there are who make objections but they will not "come and see"! They have heard concerning a certain preacher, perhaps, such-and-such absurd things. But another says, "It is not so. Come and see." Not they. They do not want to come and see—for they are unfair and prefer to cherish a bad opinion of the man. They have heard that Calvinistic doctrine is cruel, harsh and unjust. "Ah," says a Believer in Free Grace, "you have only seen a caricature of it. You should read for yourself and judge by Scripture."

Oh, no—they do not want to read! They have made up their minds—not that they have much of a mind to make up. If they had more mind it might take them longer to make it up. But, having once made up their little mind, they have no mind to unmake it. They prefer to go blindly on whether they are right or wrong. They know so much that they do not wish to learn any more. Nathanael was not of that sort. "Come and see," was an invitation which commended itself to his judgment. "Oh, yes," said he, "by all means! I am open to conviction. I will come and see."

I wish I could prevail on each one of my hearers to search the Bible for himself to see what the true doctrine is, that he may have a firm foundation to build upon and not take his religion second-hand from another. Nathanael is on his way to see for himself, when the Lord Jesus Christ, turning to those round about Him, says, in a voice loud enough for Nathanael to hear, "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile!" Here comes a man with no craft, no cunning in him. Nathanael is startled to find his real character so clearly read and somewhat bluntly asks, "From where do You know me?"

I must do him the justice of believing that he said it respectfully, yet, nevertheless, he curtly said, "From where do You know me?" As much as to say— "You have hit the nail on the head. But how came You to know this?" You see, the enquiry that was in his mind is soon upon his tongue—his words at once declare his thought. It is a great mercy when men dare speak upon that which troubles them. Instead of letting a doubt or a difficulty fester in their souls, they bring it out—that the light may play upon it and it is soon gone.

"Jesus answered and said to him, Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." What Nathanael was doing under the fig tree I do not know. Some think that he was there in meditation. Others say in prayer. Very possibly, but I do not know, and the wisest expositors do not know, and you do not know. Nobody knew but Jesus and Nathanael. He was doing something of which he was not ashamed but which he modestly did not wish to have known and so he had chosen a private place. That transaction was a secret between himself and the Lord, his God, and He who knew that secret must have come from God.

Perhaps he was doing nothing there but sitting still before the Lord in anguish of spirit. Possibly he there had looked towards the God of his fathers with hope, or had enjoyed hallowed fellowship with Heaven. Anyhow, Jesus mentioned to him something which he remembered and thought much of, though it was entirely between God and his own soul. Between Jesus and Nathanael—"under the fig tree"—served as a password. They were known to one another by that. And at once Nathanael cried, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel."

He is fairly won and by an open confession he commits himself at once to what he believes. He is not ashamed of his convictions. He has enlisted beneath the banner of the King of Israel once and for all. Forth he comes without a moment's reservation with that blessed confession of faith—"Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel." Our Lord Jesus, charmed with the grace which He had Himself given, delighted with the faith which He had Himself created, answers, "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, you believe? You shall see greater things than these." This ready convert, so speedily convinced, was very acceptable to the Lord Jesus.

Now, we have tonight here, first, one who believed readily. I am going to speak of that. Secondly, here is one who was highly commended for it— "You shall see greater things than these." Thirdly, here is one who might possibly in after days be subject to a peculiar temptation on account of his very readiness to believe. And, lastly, here is one who, I doubt not, was peculiarly grateful. And if there is another here like he, he ought to be very grateful, too.

I. First, then, HERE IS ONE WHO BELIEVED READILY. The first time he saw the Savior he was converted to the faith. The first sentences that were addressed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ fairly won him to hearty faith and loyal service. Why was that? Why was he so soon brought to discipleship?

I think, perhaps, it was because he was such a true man himself that the element of suspicion was not in his character. Persons who are remarkably suspicious and constantly incredulous are seldom very truthful themselves. If you follow them home, you will discover that they are suspicious of others because they are not true themselves and their difficulty in believing others arises from the fact that they measure other people's corn with their own bushel. They imagine that other people are as big liars as they are themselves. I believe that this is the bottom of much of the mistrust and questioning which seethes around us. Sometimes that suspiciousness comes upon men's minds through long dealing with deceptive persons. But if you find that a man began life with a general suspicion and doubt of others, you may conclude that he was a born deceiver, radically false from his birth. He judges human nature from his experience within his own heart. He has observed his own trickiness and he thinks that everybody else is going to trick him. And so he is full of suspicion. Nathanael had never taken anybody in nor tried to mislead anyone in his life and therefore he did not expect to be deceived.

I wonder whether he was a sailor. I should think that he must have been, for sailors are generally as open as the sea they sail over. He never said anything with reserve. Not he. He was accustomed to wear his heart on his sleeve even if the crows did peck at it. He could not conceal anything, nor think that others did so. He was just as honest as the day. And so he came to the Savior with a heart that was open to faith, ready to believe Him. I should think the very sight of the Savior's blessed face had half won him and the tone of that truthful voice had moved him. But

when it came to his laying bare a secret in his life which he was sure that nobody knew but himself and God, then Nathanael yielded to conviction at once and became a Believer straightway.

Now I do hope that there are some here to whom the Lord has given, from their very birth, a truthful, openhearted nature—and if you should believe in Jesus Christ tonight straightway, even though it is the first time you have ever heard of Him, I shall bless the grace of God which has led you to so speedy a closing in with Christ. Oh that the Holy Spirit may complete the work of which there is already so hopeful a beginning! But, further, this Nathanael, this rapid Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, had, I have no doubt, been seeking guidance beforehand and that guidance he had honestly followed.

I should think that he had for years been expecting the coming of the Messiah. The tone of his language argues that. Therefore, when Philip came to him and told him that he had found the Messiah and indicated to him that he had better come and see for himself, he was willing at once to come and without delay he came with the view of seeing for himself whether this Jesus of Nazareth was the Promised One. He was not only candid but he was interested. He was concerned about Divine things and in thorough earnest to know the Truth of God in reference to them. So he came to Jesus with solemn intent and eager desire.

O dear Friends, if you came to hear the Gospel in sincerity, we should expect to see more of you converted. But people come into our great assemblies to see the congregation, or to inspect the building, or to hear the preacher. Their motive is mere idle curiosity. If they get a blessing we shall heartily thank God for it and admire the sovereignty of His Grace. But when persons come, as they often do, I thank God, even from a great distance with the desire to know what the Gospel is and with a wish to find the Savior for themselves, then we have surer hope. These enquirers are the people that are likely to be converted. When fish want to be caught, it is good fishing. When they are anxious to take the bait, then the fisherman have fine times. If, my dear Hearers, you would come here saying, "I will go and see whether I can find salvation. I will hear with the intention that the hearing may be a means of grace to my soul," none of you would come long in vain where Christ Jesus is faithfully preached. If you come with a desire of understanding and knowing Him, He will come and reveal Himself to you. This was one main reason why Nathanael so speedily believed—that he came having sought guidance and desiring really to find the Messiah of whom Philip had spoken.

Observe that he was satisfied with one piece of clear evidence. That one item of evidence convinced him. The Lord Jesus said, "Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nobody knew that he had been under the fig tree except the Lord who sees all things. No mortal living was aware of what Nathanael had done, or thought, or purposed in that shady retreat. When Jesus, therefore, with a peculiar look, said "I saw you," Nathanael also saw Him that spoke to him. "Godhead alone could speak thus," said he—"there is the Spirit of God in that man. He knows the secret things of my life. He has revealed me to myself." "Rabbi," said he, "You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel." The conclusion was a sound one but how speedily it was reached!

One argument, if it is sound, is enough. If a matter is in dispute and if one man can solemnly declare that he saw such-and-such a thing and that one man is of high repute, his evidence is sufficient for a truthful man to rest upon. Twenty may come and say that they think it is so-andso

but twenty weak links will not make a strong chain. And I would rather trust to one solid link than I would trust to a chain of twenty worn and rusted links—each one of which is ready to snap. If it is so, it is so. If it is not so, it is not so. If a man has proved anything to me by one infallible proof that is enough. Hence, I believe that those who come to Christ on one bit of evidence are justified in so doing. They afterwards receive a host of confirming evidences but one is quite enough for them to begin with.

Oh that I might have some tonight who shall hear in this sermon some one thing which shall strike them as being of the Lord! I pray that some secret matter, which I do not personally know, shall yet be uttered by me so that my hearers will say to themselves, "How came that to be spoken? That fits me exactly, yet the minister could not have known it. God must have spoken to me. Only the Lord knew what I did in the back kitchen. Only He knew what I was thinking of this afternoon. But speaking through His servant He has touched a secret spring and opened a drawer in my cabinet that nobody knew of, save myself! This is the finger of God."

God grant that some may thus be led to Jesus Christ by one piece of evidence and may not tarry to feel fifty impressions on their hearts. Oh, that you would not wait for whole weeks of invitations and months of pressure and years of expostulation. But oh, that you would yield tonight! Sometimes, in warfare, cities have been taken without a shot being fired. The valiant men have come up to the gates and they have said, "Capitulate and you shall be spared." And the townsmen have opened wide their gates. I know that many other cities have had to be battered till there has been scarcely a house without tokens of shot and shell. But what has been their gain when they have been captured after all? Do not let it be so with your souls but yield at once to the conquering Savior who comes forth in the robes of His glorious Grace and bids you yield. He promises that if you accept His scepter you shall see the greatness of His Grace.

Notice, however, that although Nathanael yielded at once and believed on one bit of evidence, yet his faith went a long way! He did not merely say, "Rabbi, I believe that you are the Messiah," but he said, "You are the Son of God." This was farther than anybody else had gone at that time so far as I remember. He added, "You are the King of Israel." And this again was a great declaration to make. He worshipped Jesus and he crowned Him. He owned Him as God and he magnified Him as King. Do not suppose that the faith which is quickly born is therefore weak. No, but that faith which comes suddenly and quickly is often the very best and strongest faith in all the world. And I trust that some of you may prove it to be so tonight by flying to Christ at once—as the doves fly to their windows— and rest in Him till you find fullness of peace.

Thus much concerning the Israelite, indeed, who believed readily.

II. In the second place, HERE IS ONE WHO WAS HIGHLY COM

MENDED. The Lord Jesus owned his faith to be true faith. He said, "You believe?" But He meant that He perceived that he truly believed. He owned that though his faith was born then and there, it was the genuine article. Christ owns, as true faith, that faith which is not long in coming. Fear not, dear Hearer, that if you believe at this very moment your faith will be any the less sincere and effectual.

Jesus did more than own it to be faith. He commended it as rarely excellent. He spoke as if He were astonished. "Because I said, I saw you under the fig tree, you believe?"—as much as to say,

"Many see Me work miracles and do not believe. Do you believe so soon? They see Me heal lepers and raise the dead and yet they will not believe. But you believe merely because I said I saw you under the fig tree?" He is charmed with him for his readiness to own the Truth. Why, there are some young people who come to Christ and believe in Him by one little word from their mother. And on the other hand there are men and women who have been for fifty years hearers of the Gospel and yet have not believed.

Now, the text proves that Christ has an admiration of those who readily, willingly, obediently and cheerfully come. Those who make no questions, raise no difficulties but on comparatively slender evidence, that evidence being quite sufficient, yield their full trust to Jesus Christ their Lord. And our blessed Lord was so pleased with this ready faith that He made a promise to Nathanael. Said He, "You shall see greater things than these. If you can see so much in My one saying that I saw you under the fig tree, you have the kind of eyes that are fit to see great sights." He that will see shall see, but he that closes his eyes shall be blinded. Many are the people in this world who, if you show them the greatest marvel, do not wonder. They look at it and see nothing. When you meet with such an unobservant person, you say to yourself, "I shall not show that man anything more. It does not pay to unveil rarities to him, he has no appreciation of them." But here is another who, when you show him some curio that you have in your house, is pleased with it and spies out at once the excellence and beauty of it. You say, "I have something more which I will gladly show you!" When your visitor appreciates your choice treasure, you say to him, "I will unlock all my cabinets. I will take you into my private room and every little thing I have that can interest you, you shall see, because I perceive that you have eyes and a mind which finds gratification in rare curiosities."

Oh, you that readily believe in Christ—you are the men and women to whom Christ will make known His secrets! Those of you who are "fools and slow of heart to believe" must mend your manners, or the Holy Spirit will never lead you into the mysteries of the kingdom. Did not Jesus say to one who came to Him by night, "If I have told you earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" But, you Israelites, indeed, you quick Believers—to you will He reveal Himself as the Ladder that father Jacob saw, reaching from earth to Heaven, upon which the angels ascend and descend between God and His chosen. You shall see the deep things of God. You are the people out of whom He will make such men as John, who, in Patmos, beheld a glorious Apocalypse.

O my beloved Hearers, may it be so with you! Because your faith so readily chimes in with what Christ reveals, may you have visions of God and may none of you be so dull of heart that it shall be said, "He could not show them many mighty works because of their unbelief"!

III. I have thus spoken and I come, thirdly, to notice that HERE IS A MAN WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY BE TROUBLED WITH A PECULIAR TEMPTATION.

People of this kind are subject to a special trial with which I will now deal. In this Church a considerable number of us, beginning with the pastor, came to Christ after an awful amount of conviction and despondency. We are none the better for this but we are at least free from one particular temptation of the Evil One. Oh, how I look back upon those times in which I felt my bondage but could not attain liberty—those days in which Christ was preached to me but I could not hear Him and I wandered up and down everywhere before I found peace!

In this Church and in the officers of the Church among the deacons, there is especially one dear Brother who sometimes can hardly understand me when I speak about the difficulties some have in coming to Christ for he never experienced them. You all know him, one of the sweetest and best of men. But he came to Jesus Christ as a boy readily enough. He heard the Gospel and he believed it and without any sort of terror he rejoiced in the Lord and he continues to do so to this day. He is none the worse saint for this but in some respects all the better.

I know, however, what is the peculiar temptation of those who come so readily to Christ. The devil comes to them and he says, "Now, look at you. You have read Mr. Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding,' have you not?" "Yes," says the good man. "Well," says he, "you never went through the like battle and struggle." "No, I never did." "Then," says he, "You are no child of God. You see you were easily converted—there was no deep work in your soul. You came to Jesus Christ one sunshiny day and you will go away from Him one dark day. You are like the stony-ground hearer, the seed sprang up in you on a sudden, because there was no depth of earth and you will soon die away when the sun is risen with fervent heat."

Now, the next time the devil comes to any of you with that, I want you to talk to him, if he is worth it, for your own good. I want you to quench the fiery dart which he will fling at you. It is true that many come to the Lord Jesus under extreme difficulties and are long before they can rest in faith. But you must not compare yourself with others, nor expect that the work of God will take precisely the same shape in every heart. Some, like Nicodemus, say, "How can these things be?" But others believe in Jesus as readily as Nathanael did and they come just as truly, just as really, just as lastingly as those who find it difficult to come.

Let me help you with a few considerations. Those you have read of, who came to Christ under so much terror—it may be that they had some other trouble at the same time—as well as the trouble of their conscience. Perhaps, in addition to being convinced of sin, they were suffering from poverty, or sickness, or indigestion, or remorse, or some other vexation of spirit. Discern carefully between spiritual trouble and temporal trouble. Temporal trouble may help to aggravate the spiritual but it is not a necessary part of it—in fact, very much the reverse. It may increase the apparent depth of the work of repentance but it may detract from its real worth.

In the next place, it may be, and probably is, the fact that those who found so much difficulty in coming to Christ were worried by Satan. Perhaps he injected into their minds blasphemous thoughts or he suggested doubts concerning the Scriptures, or the Truth of God. Because they were just escaping from his power he worried them most maliciously. Do you want to be worried in that way? Do you think that there is any advantage in Satan's attacks? If you can get to Christ without them, ought you not to be thankful to escape them? How can you desire an affliction so utterly undesirable? How can you wish to feel that which those who suffer from it would give their eyes to be rid of? I beseech you, be reasonable.

In many persons their difficulties in coming to Christ were caused very largely by their melancholy temperament. We are not all alike cheerful by natural constitution. Why, here is one man who is bright-eyed by nature and when he is down he is higher up than others are when they are up. He is always bright and hopeful. Yonder is another Brother who seems inevitably to take a dark view of matters. He is an unhappily constituted person. A person with whom it is not easy to live except in a very large hotel, in which the dinner-table is many yards long. You know and avoid the style of

man.

If there is a melancholy disposition, it tends to darken the work of the Spirit in the heart. And whereas the work of the Spirit makes the man sorrowful, his own melancholy disposition, perhaps caused by mental disease, darkens that sorrow into black despair. Few of us are perfectly sane. In fact, I do not think anybody is altogether so. I see you smile but I am not jesting—we have each one a peculiarity which we could hardly defend by the rules of strict reasoning. Have we not? We are all a little "touched" by that black hand which sin stretched out when it shook our universal manhood in all its faculties.

Some are touched with melancholy from their birth and so a part of their great terror, when under conviction, may arise from the fact that they are not absolutely free to form a hopeful judgment. Why should you wish to be like they? What can there be desirable about feelings which spring from a disease?

Again, there is no doubt that many in coming to Christ are greatly troubled because they are ignorant. They do not know that which would comfort them if they did but know it. They are vexed with fears which would not exist if they were better acquainted with Scripture. If they knew more of the Doctrines of Grace they would not be vexed with the fears which their ignorance creates. You who are taught in the Word are all the more likely to find speedy peace. Now, dear Friends, do you want to be bothered with fears which only spring out of ignorance? Must it not be much better for you, having a clearer light and a brighter knowledge, to say, "Yes, that is it. I believe in Jesus Christ and I am saved. Blessed be His name! I ask no questions. I believe and am saved at once"?

May it not also be that those who are so hard put to it in coming to Christ are without the helps that you have? Perhaps they cannot read. Possibly they have nobody to explain the Scriptures to them. They may be misled by their religious guides and have no one to keep them out of the ditch. It may be that they are placed where they are rather hindered than helped—they have no Sunday school teacher, no Christian friend to sympathize with them. And so they have a hard fight of it. Many a man who is wounded in battle is soon restored because the surgeon takes him up as soon as the bullet lays him low. Whereas the wound of another, who has to lie and bleed for hours, will prove far more serious. Do you not think that you ought to be very thankful that you have so many things to help you, and that thus you the more readily come to Christ?

Very possibly, too, many of those who had those terrors and horrors in coming to Christ, as I had myself, must lay them to the door of their unbelief. Had they believed, they might have had comfort long before. But they went to the Law for comfort, or they looked to feelings instead of looking to Christ and so they remained in darkness. Now, if you have the privilege of believing at once, as I pray you may have, should you not be glad of it and instead of envying those others, should you not thank God that you were brought to find Jesus Christ by so sunny and speedy a route?

There is a story that I have told you before but I must tell it to you again, for I do not know anything better. A young man in Edinburgh went out and he thought he would speak about Jesus to the first person that he met with. He met a Mussel burgh fishwife carrying a great load on her back. I cannot speak Scotch—I have not that useful acquirement—so I will put the conversation into English. He said to her, "Here you are with your burden." "Yes," said she. "Well," he said, "did you ever feel a spiritual burden?" "Yes," said she, "that I did, long ago, long ago and I soon got rid of it.

For I did not go the same way to work that John Bunyan's pilgrim did."

"Oh," thought the young man, "I hoped that I had met with a Christian woman, but she must be a great heretic to talk in that way." "Now," said she, "Bunyan's Evangelist that he speaks of was not half a Gospel preacher. He was one of the usual sort. He was not clear in the Gospel. For when he met with the poor pilgrim, weary with his burden, he said to him, 'Do you see that wicket-gate?' 'No,' said the man, 'I do not see it.' 'Do you see that light over the gate?' 'Well,' he said, 'I think I do.' 'Now,' he said, 'you run that way with your burden.' Why man," said she, "that was not the way to do at all. What had that man to do with the wicket-gate or with the light over it?

"The Gospel does not say run to a gate or a light. What he should have said was, 'Do you see that Cross? Look at that and your burden will fall from your shoulder.' I looked straight away to the Cross and not to the wicket-gate. And at the Cross I lost my burden. Now," said she, "what did Pilgrim get by going round to the wicket-gate? He tumbled into the Slough of Despond and was like to have lost his life there." "Ah," said the young man, "did you never go through the Slough of Despond?" "Ah, yes!" she said, "I have been through that slough many a time. But, let me tell you, it is much better to go through it with your burden off than it is with your burden on."

And so it is. I do not want any of you to attempt to flounder through the Slough of Despond with your burden on. I want you to have done with the Slough of Despond and the wicket-gate and all that bother and just look to Christ alone. For salvation lies in a look at Him and there is salvation in none other. Peace comes to sinners by nothing else but faith in Jesus. All else is vain, be it what it may. Frames and feelings, sinkings and risings, doings and fretting—all these may go for nothing. Believe in Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. This is God's short way to Heaven and blessed is he who knows how to take it.

Listen yet once more. You say, "But I have heard of some who endured a dreadful Law-work within their souls. They were plowed and cut up dreadfully and I never was." I will further tell you that certain persons need rougher handling than others. The needle in surgery will do for certain cases, whereas the lancet is wanted for others. If the Lord can, with a needle, do for you all that is needed, why do you want more? The Lord required to take the knife to me and are you going to fret because you have never felt the deep gashes which made me cry out in agony? I pray you, be not such a fool—I cannot speak a softer word if you have a craving after anguish.

Again, the Lord may deal roughly with some because He means to qualify them for comforting despairing souls. He puts His servants through the furnace when He means them to work at pulling others out of the fire. He chastens them every morning because He means to make Barnabases of them, that they may be sons of consolation to souls in distress. I have been through the thick darkness at times for your sakes. If ever a soul was in a horror of great darkness, I was, one day, when I preached in this pulpit from "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" I could not understand why I felt in such an awful state as I did, till that evening there came into the vestry a man whose hair seemed to stand on end.

He looked at me and said, "I have never found a preacher that met my experience before." We sat down and he told me his tale of woe. By God's grace I rescued that man, by seasonable comfort, from being sent to a lunatic asylum and perhaps from committing suicide. And then I said to the Lord my God, "Let me go through the fire again if it will help me to meet the case of your poor

afflicted children. Let me feel the horror of great darkness, if so I may thereby find light with which to cheer the victims of despair."

But you, my dear Brother, my dear Sister, may not be called thus to cut your way through the forests of sorrow as the pioneer of others. You are not sent to be a guide to thousands but quietly to pursue your own lowly way. And why do you want all this painful experience? You cannot make use of it. Be thankful that you are spared the ordeal. These who have to be champions must be trained for war after a sterner sort than those who only make up the rank and file of the army. If your Lord means to lead you only as sheep at His heel into the green pastures by the still waters, you will see but little of the war and little of the rough side of the march. And why should you be so stupid as to desire distress and condemn yourself because you have it not?

Be a Nathanael. Take the happier and better side and believe your God without a doubt or a quibble. And go to Heaven following the Lamb wherever He goes, without doubt or fear. I was going to have another head but I think that I will not, I will venture no further but close with a word to sinners, although I have in truth been speaking to them all through my discourse.

Hear me, you that would be saved! The way of salvation is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, by trusting Him. There are two things I have to say to you. First, God COMMANDS you to believe in Jesus Christ—and, secondly, nothing you can do will please God so much as for you to believe at once in His Only-Begotten Son, whom He has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. These are two strong things to say and so I will not say them, of myself, but give you God's Word for them. Please note these texts down, all of you. First Epistle of John, third chapter, at the twenty-third verse—"And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Let me tell you where it is again. First Epistle of John, third chapter, twenty-third verse—"This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." If you are commanded to do it, do it. If you have salvation promised you when you do believe on the name of Jesus, why then, believe, and have salvation. Believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ. That is the first point. God commands you—will you disobey?

The second thing I said was that nothing you can do will please God so much as for you, now, to believe in Jesus Christ. Look at the sixth chapter of John's Gospel and the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses. There you have it. "Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" They meant, "What are the best works, the works most pleasing to God?" "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." If you could build a row of almshouses, or endow a Church, or pay the salaries of a hundred missionaries, it would not half so well please God as for you to believe on His Son Jesus Christ.

Trust Christ and you have worshipped God as acceptably as cherubim and seraphim. Trust Christ and you have brought unto the Lord that which will charm Him more than the hallelujahs which day without night, circle His Throne with praise. You poor guilty man, you poor guilty woman—humble, unknown, obscure, a nobody—God bids you trust His Son and assures you that this will please Him more than all else you can do! Will you not do it? Oh, end your ramblings! End your strivings! End your seeking! Come and trust my Lord Jesus and you shall receive eternal life. Your fretting and your hoping and your doubting, your coming and your going—end them all by simply trusting Jesus and it is finished—you are saved from wrath and the life of holiness has begun in you.

Now shall you live after a nobler sort. Now shall you be filled with good works to the praise of His Glory, seeing you are no more trusting in them. I beseech you, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone and you shall receive power to become a child of God.

May the Lord bless you, dear Friends! May we all meet in Heaven, the whole company of us, without exception, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

John 1,50-51 #1478 - Greater Things Yet Who Shall

GREATER THINGS YET

WHO SHALL SEE THEM?

NO. 1478

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1879,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under

the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. And He said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Henceforth you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

John 1:50-51.

WE cannot help making a few remarks upon the narrative before we

proceed to the distinct subject of discourse. Certain catch words are exceedingly worthy of notice since they are abundantly full of instruction. When Nathanael had doubts as to whether the Messiah could come from Nazareth, Philip answered Him, "Come and see." Now, those were the precise words which the Lord Jesus had Himself used to His earliest disciples when they began to follow Him—He said to them, "Come and see." It is always safe for us to use over again words which God has blessed. Did the Master say, "Come and see"? Then we cannot do better than say what Jesus said and use, as near as possible, the Inspired expressions.

Was that short sentence, "Come and see," made useful to other souls? Then those who would win souls cannot do better than use such Gospel nets as have been tried and proven efficient in their own cases. Let none of us say that we cannot speak to others about their souls. There was one passage of Scripture which was the means of our conversion and we cannot do better than repeat it in hearty tones to others, hoping that what God has blessed to us, He may bless to others. Short as were the inviting words, "Come and see," it was full of wisdom. Our Lord knows the philosophy of the human mind and understands how best to produce faith in doubting hearts. "Come and see" is the sure cure for unbelief.

Some would tell doubters to sit down and think and create faith by reflecting on the nature of things. We may long consider the state of man and the condition of our own nature before we shall thereby be enlightened as to the way of salvation. If we would judge of Christ we must consider Christ, Himself. He is His own best argument! The cobweb spinnings of conceited brains are easily broken through, but the facts, the indisputable facts of the Savior's life and death hold the

understanding and the heart as with iron bands. As our Savior said and as His servant, Philip, said, even so say we to all who would know Christ, "Come and see"!

Be not blinded by prejudices or misled by preconceptions, but read His story for yourselves. Seek His face for yourselves and taste and see that the Lord is good! Personal communion with Jesus is still the best evidence of His personal excellence and His power to save. Brothers and Sisters, have you any doubts about the Master? "Come and see." Do you say within yourself, "Can He save such an one as I am?" "Come and see." Do your sins cast you down and cause you to despair because you fear that even the Redeemer's blood cannot cleanse you? "Come and see." See Him as the Son of God and the Son of Man! See Him in His life of holiness and in His death of substitution! Or see Him, if you will, up yonder at the right hand of God, making intercession for sinners!

And as you are looking upon Him, faith will steal in upon you through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the mind's eye that must look and by that look, repentance and faith find entrance to the soul. "Come and see," for nothing will save a man but a personal sight of a personal Savior. Therefore, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." The Lord Himself says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Our Lord Jesus Christ seems to have so approved of the advice of Philip that He, Himself, followed it up and kept to the same form of expression.

Did Philip say, "Come and see"? Then the Lord Jesus says, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you: you have come to see Me, but I have already seen you: there has been an antecedent look on My part: I saw you before you did know anything about Me, or had even heard of Me from Philip." Nor does our Lord change His note even to the end of the conversation, but closes it by saying, "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." There, you see, is the great plan of salvation as it is worked in us! First the Savior sees us, even when we are a great way off. Then we come and see and our hearts find rest in our Redeemer. And then, in later days, He gives us yet brighter and clearer views of Himself and of His Kingdom!

Oh, who would not come and see if this is so? If at our first coming and seeing we find life and rest, what must those still greater things be which are yet to be revealed? All that faith has yet discovered is but a foretaste and an earnest of more glorious sights which shall yet be opened up before our favored eyes, for Jesus Himself says, "You shall see greater things than these."

Other parts of the conversation are equally worthy of notice, as showing how fully the mind of the childlike Nathanael and the holy Child Jesus responded to each other, as all true and childlike minds always do. Our Lord, as soon as He saw Nathanael, called him, "an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile." Jesus knew his simple, frank, open-hearted character and he produced an example of it, for Nathanael did not blush with mock modesty and pretend to question the praise, but in the simplest and most unaffected manner, he tacitly admitted the description to be true and said, "From where do You know me?" He felt in his own conscience that he was a true son of that wrestling Jacob who became prevailing Israel and, in accepting the title, he made his words responsive to those of Jesus, for he said in effect, "True, I am an Israelite, but You are the King of Israel."

To this our Lord seemed to reply, "You are an Israelite, and you have acknowledged Israel's King. And now you shall have Israel's privileges for, like he, you shall see Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Thus, as in water, face answers to face, so did the heart of man to man in the communion of these two guileless spirits! Their thoughts were so true that they harmonized like the parts of well-composed music! Their words so frankly bespoke their hearts that they answered to one another like the echo to the voice. This is the character of the communion between our Master and His sanctified ones. He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," and the heart replies, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

The spouse says, "Yes, He is altogether lovely," and her Bridegroom replies, "You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you." Our Lord calls us, "My love, My dove, My undefiled," and we, being in full communion with Him, reply, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." As upon the sea in time of storm, deep calls unto deep, so within the sanctified heart, in heavenly calm, truth calls unto truth—one word of love wakes up another—the commendation given by condescending love brings forth the praise of grateful affection. But to produce this mutual sympathy there must be a common character, a similar absence of guile, for this is the great condition of fellowship with Jesus.

God's ways towards us are made to meet our own in a most instructive way. "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful. With an upright man You will show Yourself upright. With the pure You will show Yourself pure and with the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate." When His children open their hearts to Him, He opens His mind to them. When they are true Israelites, He gives them the true Israel's privileges. When they acknowledge Him to be a great and glorious King, He makes them to see the great things of His Kingdom. May it be ours through Grace to be as little children, even as Nathanael was, for so shall we behold the Kingdom of God!

With those prefatory remarks we come at length to consider the promise of our Lord Jesus to Nathanael. May the Holy Spirit instruct us! I think I am warranted in saying that this is the Savior's first personal Word of promise and it is instructive that He gave it, not to the most talented, but to the most simple-hearted of His disciples. It was, moreover, no mean promise, but full of the largest conceivable meaning. "You shall see greater things than these." Those must be very great things which were greater than what Nathanael had already seen—there is room for boundless expectation in the words! It was promise which brought another linked with it as part and parcel of it. How often one Divine blessing is like a link of a chain of gold and draws another with it—"You shall see greater things than these" is followed by, "henceforth you shall see Heaven open."

The beauty of it, in this instance, is that albeit Nathanael obtained a promise for himself at first, "you shall see," yet this drew on the promise for all his brethren, for the 51st verse does not run, "hereafter or henceforth you shall see Heaven open," but henceforth, "you shall see Heaven open." It is a great thing to receive a personal promise, but it is a greater thing, still, to secure a promise for all our Master's household! Happy Nathanael to have been the occasion for the proclamation of the opening of Heaven and the commerce between Heaven and earth—the communion of saints with the things in Heaven through their Mediator and Lord! This is the highest form of blessing when we are not only favored, ourselves, but are made the occasion for enriching others! Was not this the choice inheritance of Abraham, "I will bless you and you shall be a blessing"?

In considering the words which our Savior spoke to Nathanael, I should like you to notice first, the favored man to whom He spoke them. Then the gracious reward which is described in them. And lastly, the special sight comprised in that reward. In all this may we be actual partakers and not mere lookers.

I. Let us think of THIS FAVORED MAN. Nathanael was "an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile." He was one of those who were not only of the chosen seed after the flesh, but after the Spirit. He was noted for being a simple-minded, unsophisticated person—as honest as the day. He was a truthful man who knew nothing of policy, or craft, or double dealing, or reserve. He was a man out of whom all the twists had been taken—an upright and downright man—true to the core and transparent as clear glass!

He was not a Jacobite, a child of the crafty supplanter, but an Israelite, an Israelite, indeed, with the Jacob extracted out of him. He was pure, simple-hearted, ingenuous—not childish, but yet thoroughly childlike. To such a man the Word of God was given, "You shall see greater things than these." Notice, first, that he was a man who honestly made enquiries which fairly suggested themselves. Before he became a Believer, he did not, as some do, invent doubts and raise questions, which questions are merely raised for question's sake. He did not put queries to Philip which he could have answered himself, nor seek to entangle his instructor by artful speech. Nothing of the sort. He sought truth, not controversy and word-chopping.

The two questions which he put came out of his heart and were points which seemed to be vital to him. He did not go about to discover difficulties, but they occurred to him then and there and he spoke them out with honest plainness. He was told that the Messiah had been found and that He was Jesus of Nazareth. I am sure he was well acquainted with Holy Writ and he did not recollect any text in which the Christ was said to come out of Nazareth and, therefore, he thought within himself, "I read of Bethlehem Ephratah, that out of it shall He come forth who is to be Ruler in Israel, but I do not remember a word concerning Nazareth." Without a moment's hesitation, he put the question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Nazareth was a poor, miserable little place of unsavory reputation. This, then, was a difficulty—a true and real difficulty—and he stated it and was content to, "come and see." When the Savior met him with the words, "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile," he enquired, "From where do You know me?" A most natural question to ask, for on its answer would depend the value of the words. Might it not happen that this accurate description of himself might have come to Jesus by report? If a correct description of Nathanael's character had reached the Savior by Philip or any other friend, then it did not prove anything. But if Jesus knew it by His own perception and could read the character of a man to whom He was a stranger, then Nathanael knew what conclusion to draw! So he only asks the question because it ought to be asked and not to be a trick question. How I love to meet with seekers who, though they are in difficulties, are willing to be led out of them and are not studying how to invent more! Some of you cannot find peace in Christ because you willfully darken the atmosphere around yourselves. You are not assailed by doubt, but you invite doubt to assail you! You believe a great deal more than you care to admit, but you do not want to believe and are fishing for excuses for your unbelief. It is a sad state of mind for a man to be in—to be trying to discover reasons why he should not be saved—but that is what many are doing. That is a wretched mind which manufactures difficulties and complicates plain things

because it cannot or will not take a thing in its straightforward, simple meaning, but must be puzzled and perplexed.

Some men are too intellectual to believe the poor man's Gospel—the poor man runs and reads the Gospel—the Gospel of, "Believe and live." The intellectual must be mystified, or excited, or driven to despair—or else they refuse to believe. There is a craving in some men for something that will appall them and fill them with despair. Is not this folly? Wait not for such sensations, I pray you! If you do, you will miss the blessing! But if, even while as yet you have not received full faith, you are honest enough to admit of none but honest difficulties, there is in you some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel and the Lord is praised for it.

This Nathanael without guile was, next, a man who honestly yielded to the force of the Truth of God. Omniscience was proven to be an attribute of Christ to Nathanael by the pointed remark which Jesus addressed to him. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? "I know," says one, "for I have heard it said he was praying." Well, I did not say he was not praying, but I will defy anybody to prove that he was! What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? We frequently read, in the Talmudic writers, of learned rabbis who studied the Law under the fig tree. Was Nathanael studying the Law? I did not say he was not, but I will defy anybody to prove that he was! What was he doing under the fig tree? There are only two people who could have told us and both of these are silent on the matter. Both Jesus and Nathanael knew, but no one else!

What he was doing under the fig tree, we may not pretend to guess, for it is more instructive to leave it in the dark—our Lord's words were a kind of secret sign to Nathanael, all the more conclusive because perfectly unknown and uninterpreted by the rest of mankind. Whether he was going to be baptized by John the Baptist and sat down there to think of what he was doing. Or whether, having been baptized, being on the way home, he suddenly felt an impression that he must sit in that place and wait—he knew not why—I may not profess to know. But it was an important moment to his own mind and he remembered it as such. As soon as Jesus said, with a look, "When you were under the fig tree," Nathanael was startled into a conviction that his secret heart was known to Jesus.

Under that tree he had done, or said, or thought something known only to himself. How had the Person before him known of that deed? It was true that his deed, or word, or thought under the fig tree was a pure, simple and honest one, but how did Jesus know? "If He knows that I was under the fig tree and knows what I was doing there. And if He read my simple-minded, guileless character when I was there, then He is the Son of God, the King of Israel!" This was Nathanael's immediate conclusion and the argument was very clear and complete.

Similar reasoning was used by others soon after Nathanael's conversion and with the same result. When our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Go, call your husband and come here," and she replied, "I have no husband," He answered, "You have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly." Then the woman said, "Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" It was good argument, for Omniscience proves Godhead. An Omniscient one here in human flesh among the sons of men must be the Anointed of God! He must be the Lord's Christ!

I do not know whether Nathanael remembered the passage of Scripture, but this was the kind of argument used by the great God, Himself, when He proved Himself to be God in Isaiah 44:5. Notice how the passage, in many of its words, is parallel to our text. One shall say, I am the Lord's and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel. "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God." And what is the proof of it? "Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them." He challenges the false gods to tell what was being done in secret places and what was to be done in the future and He gives this as a proof of His Godhead!

The heathen oracles attempted prophecy because they saw how clearly it would prove the existence of their gods. Our Lord is a discerner of hearts, reading them as a scholar scans his books and we know Him to be our God. Nathanael had drunk into the very essence of that wonderful 139th Psalm. No greater proof of Godhead can be given than the fact that all things are naked and open before the Lord! "O Lord, You have searched me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off." When I sat under the fig tree You did read my heart.

"You compass my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hands upon me. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence?" All this, you see, is a manifestation of Godhead. Nathanael argued, therefore—"He saw me when nobody else did! He read my character in a simple act, an act which other people might have misunderstood and thought me a fool! He perceived the uprightness of my heart and now I know that He is certainly Divine!"

Notice, further, the blessing of our text comes to a man who in simple honesty believes much upon the evidence of one assured fact. It is proven that Christ can see in secret and read men's hearts—and from this, in addition to His Divinity, Nathanael infers that "He is a great Teacher"—and he makes his first confession of faith by calling Him, "Rabbi." He is sure that He who knows all things is worthy to be a teacher and he gives Him the teacher's title. Then, as we have already said, he perceives that if He is Omniscient, He is Divine and he makes the confession, "You are the Son of God." And, not satisfied with that, he sees that if He is, indeed, the Son of God, He must be Ruler and Lord and, therefore, he calls Him the King of Israel.

See here how he drinks into the spirit of the second Psalm, where Son and King are the two great notes of harmony. "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You. Kiss the Son lest He is angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Gladly does Nathanael submit Himself to the Son and proclaim Him King of Israel. Was not this the first time that our Lord had been actually proclaimed as King since He had come into His public ministry? Was not this the answer to the wise men's question when they followed His star from regions far remote?

Here was He who was born King of the Jews! This guileless man, who seemed to lack shrewdness, had seen more than his fellows. His eyes, undimmed by falsehood or suspicion, had

seen the King, though His humiliation had unclothed Him of His royal mantle and taken off His crown. See, then, Beloved, that the gist of our first head is this—It is the pure in heart that shall see God! We must be honest and sincere; we must be clear of all subtlety and craft; we must be transparent as glass before Him or else the Lord will not reveal Himself to us or by us! He loves the guileless and the true—and when He has made us thus, He will fill us with light but not till then. Note, again, that those who are ready to believe upon sure evidence—for Nathanael needed that—are the men who shall see more and more. Nathanael did not require the evidence to be repeated to Him again and again—he saw the argument at once and yielded himself to it. When a point is once proven, it is proven—and that is an end of it.

One conclusive argument is as good as 20 to an unsophisticated mind. Those who are willing to see shall see. Heaven is open to those from whose eyes the scales of prejudice are removed. The Lord manifests Himself to those who manifest themselves to Him. If you will be Christians of the highest type, you must be true to the core and you must realize Christ and believe in Him with that mighty faith which sees Him and realizes Him as close at hand. The Presence and the power of Jesus must be undoubted by your soul—they must be as much a matter of fact to you as your own existence—and then yours shall be the words which we are now about to consider—"You shall see greater things than these."

II. Let us now look at THE GRACIOIUS REWARD. Only a few words upon it. Because this simple-hearted man had believed upon the one argument of the Lord's discernment of his heart, he was favored with the promise of seeing greater things. By these words our Lord meant that His perceptions would become more vivid. Do you believe? You shall see! If we demand to see first, we shall never believe! But if we are willing to believe we shall, by-and-by, see.

There is a growth in faith which renders it not the less faith and yet approximates it more and more nearly to sense. I mean, "sense," in its best signification—so that what at first we believe, simply upon the testimony of God, we come, by-and-by, to believe upon personal experience. We believe until we so realize the Object of faith that we look at the things which are not seen and see Him who is invisible. From this we go further, still, until we both taste and handle of the good Word of Life and faith becomes the substance of things hoped for. From looking to Christ we come to live, move and have our being in Him. The eye of faith gathers strength. At first it sees Christ through its tears and that look saves the soul, though it perceives comparatively little of Him. But in later days the eye of faith becomes so powerful that it emulates that of the eagle which can gaze upon the sun at midday. Thus faith becomes a second sight. Remember our Lord's words to Martha, "Said I not unto you, that if you would believe you should see the Glory of God?" "Do you believe? You shall see."

This was not all our Lord's meaning. He virtually promised that Nathanael should discover other Truths of God than he as yet knew. "You shall see greater things than these." Now, what is there greater to be seen than the Omniscience of Christ? "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high: I cannot attain unto it." Is there anything greater than this? Yes, so the Savior says! I suppose He means this—First, as you have seen My Omniscience in your own case, you shall go on to see it in the case of all mankind, for by My Cross shall the thoughts of many hearts be revealed and by My Gospel shall men be revealed unto themselves. The Word of God is quick and powerful and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart—and when Nathanael came to

preach it in later years, he found it so and saw for himself that Christ read every man's heart.

How wonderfully do we know this to be true in our time and in this place, for here the Word of God finds us out and lays us bare to our own consciences! You have been startled in your seats, sometimes. You have wondered how it could be that not only in the gross has your experience been set before you, but even in little details there have been minute touches which have amazed you with the distinctness of the Divine knowledge! Our Lord did not say, "I saw you under a tree," as if it might have been an oak or an olive, but He spoke definitely of "the fig tree." Even so does He cause His ministers to be very minute and particular so that you wonder where their knowledge comes from! And so, when this is done on a large scale—as it is done whenever Christ is preached—then is it true that we see greater things than when, for the first time, we perceive that our own character is revealed.

He would see "greater things," next, because he would see more of the Godhead. Did you see Omniscience? You shall see Omnipotence! Did you discover that I could read your heart? You shall learn that I can change your heart! Did you find that My eyes could glance into the secrets of your soul? You shall find My Word casting out devils, healing the sick and hushing the storms! You shall see clearer ensigns of My Godhead than this one experiment in the reading of the heart. The Lord, in calling Himself the Son of Man, opens up to Nathanael one of those greater things. He had perceived Him to be the Son of God by His reading his heart and it was a great thing to perceive the Godhead, but it was a greater wonder, still, to see that Godhead linked with humanity!

Jesus, as Son of God, is glorious, but at the same time as Son of Man, He has a double Glory! Our Lord seemed to say to Nathanael, "You have believed that I am the Son of God—you shall see the Son of Man." And is this a greater thing? In one sense it is a descent for Jesus to be the Son of Man, but yet, you who know how to read the riddle aright will say that the Godhead is not half so wonderful in itself as when it comes to be united with our humanity. The Incarnation has about it a mystery which is not seen, even in the mystery of the Godhead! That there should be a God, heathens might spell out—but that this God should come in human flesh among us—this is the mystery which angels desired to look into! Nor may I forget that the idea of our Lord as King of Israel is not so great as His connection with all nations which is displayed in His title, Son of man. He is not confined in His Grace to Israel, as Nathanael probably thought, but He is Brother to our entire humanity! Here was another of the greater things!

Note further that Nathanael had only seen an opened heart, but now he was to see an opened Heaven. He had seen Christ's eyes entering into his secrets, but he was now to see communications established between the lowly hearts of men and the secrets of Heaven! He saw how Christ, Son of God, dwelt among men—he is now to see how the abodes of God and man shall be blended in one and high communion maintained between earth and Heaven. I come back to the one thought, that the sight of greater things is reserved for guileless Believers. To those who already have much by faith, more shall be given. Beloved, as a Church and people, we have seen great things in this place in the work of the Lord among us. And we have lately celebrated with much joy and thankfulness the loving kindness of the Lord to us—let us make this a new starting point and hear the Lord say—"From this day will I bless you."

We desire to see much greater things than we have known and, in order to this, we must have more faith. And that faith must be more simple and childlike. The rule of the Kingdom is that

according to our faith, so shall it be unto us. Unbelief bars the way of mercy. We tie the hands of Jesus if we have no faith. Is it not written, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? We must believe or we shall not be established, nor shall our works prosper. Whatever we have accomplished has been worked by faith, but we believe that we might have done a hundred times more if we had manifested a hundred times more faith. May the Lord grant us downright, honest, simple faith and then we shall see greater things than these, for all obstacles will be removed and eternal love will work wonders among us!

Faith makes a man a fit instrument for God to use and, therefore, God does great things by him. If you are unbelieving, God will no more use you than a warrior would use a reed for a weapon! He works no wonders by unbelieving ministers and unbelieving churches, for these are not prepared to be blessed—they are not vessels fit for the Master's use—rust is upon them of the worst kind. When your heart is resting in the Lord, expecting to see His arm made bare and quietly waiting to see how He will glorify Himself and fulfill His promises, then will you see greater things! When faith fails, it disqualifies us and sets us aside even as in the case of Moses and Aaron, to whom the Lord said, "Because you believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation unto the land which I have given them."

We must have faith, for faith fulfils the condition which is virtually appended to every promise. Has not the Lord promised to answer the prayers of those who cry unto Him believingly? But as for the wavering, He has said, "Let not that man expect to receive anything of the Lord." Is not faith our very life? "The just shall live by faith." Is it not our entrance into blessedness? We see that Israel in the wilderness could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief. All the promises are for Believers—there are none for unbelievers. "As you have believed so be it unto you," stands as the measure of blessing—there is no other. Strong faith, coupled with a guileless character, brings a man into the special, complacent love of God, for, albeit that He loves all His elect, He does not delight in all alike. There were Apostles among the disciples—there were three choice ones out of the twelve—there was one peculiar favorite out of the three!

He is dearest to God who trusts Him most completely and is most childlike and true. God will do most by that man who is most reliant upon Him and most open with Him. David, who makes the Lord, alone, to be his confidence, is the man after God's own heart. And Abraham, who in faith could even give up his only son, is the friend of God. We shall never be full-gown with God until we become too little to dare to doubt; too insignificant to venture to question and too true to suspect the Lord. Increase in faith is the one thing necessary to our advance in the Divine life and work—and may the Holy Spirit work it in us for Christ's name's sake!

III. We have only a minute or two in which to mention THE SPECIAL SIGHT which was promised to Nathanael. He was to see an opened Heaven. The gates of Glory are not only opened now to Believers, but they are carried right away and Heaven is laid open to all its citizens, even to those who dwell below. This is a great joy to the believing heart, for free communion with Heaven is the delight of our spirit.

I cannot enlarge upon this, which is worthy of another sermon, but I may not say less than this—that in Christ the saints are brought very near to God, for even now they have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. The franchise of the new Jerusalem is extended to these low-lying regions in which we sojourn. The veil is torn and we have access to the holiest. The wall of separation is

removed and now the abode of the Church below is an adjunct of Heaven, a suburban district of the metropolitan city of the New Jerusalem. The gates shall not be shut, nor a division created, nor communion suspended. Is not that a glorious thing, that in the Person of Christ Jesus, Heaven is laid open to earth and earth laid open to communications with Heaven?

Do you know that, Beloved? It is a simple thing to talk of, but do you know it? Have you taken up your citizenship, so that you can say, "Truly our citizenship is in Heaven"? While you are sitting under that fig tree do you know what it is to sit in the heavenly places, together with Christ? Are you risen and reigning with Him even now? If so, this is a joyful state of things and one which should cause you much assurance! We are now dwelling in the house of our God, or at the very least we are sitting by the very gate of Heaven! Our condition is known to the Lord and He is near to help us. We suffer not unseen and labor not unobserved. Nothing hinders God from helping us—nothing hinders us from securing His aid.

Then the Lord went on to promise that he should see that the communion between Heaven and earth, by the way of the Mediator, is not only possible, but actual. The ladder is set and there are angels ascending and descending upon it. God hears, helps and speaks with believing men of pure heart. Observe, that according to the text, the angels ascend first. It does say, "Descending and ascending," as we might naturally suppose, but they ascend first because when Jesus was on earth they were already here and ascended at His bidding to carry His messages upward! When Jesus Christ was here, He was never without His bodyguard of angels and these were His messengers to the courts above.

We, today, Beloved, are surrounded by the forces of the Eternal—they have not to come to us for the first time—lo, they have, these many years, kept watch and guard around the fold of the redeemed! And when a new danger comes, they are prompt to do the part of watchers and of guardians and to carry tidings to the sentinels of Heaven. Let us pray, for as we pray our prayers ascend to Heaven and our praises, too. If we lead an angelical life, our thoughts will always be going up to Heaven or returning. Beloved, have you realized this—that as you have believed in Christ upon the testimony of His Word, you have now the right of access to the Eternal Throne at all times? You have but to speak and God will hear you!

Some of God's people do not know much about this. Praying is a religious exercise with them—a very proper exercise, but it is not speaking with God—it is not doing business with God and obtaining supplies at His hands. It is a ladder without angels, or, if you please, with ascending angels only, but none coming down with heavenly gifts! Beloved, I hope you have not fallen into this error. What? Is not prayer real with you? Do you expect nothing from it? Would you send an angel on a fool's errand? Do these ascend to Heaven in mere sport and rush up and down to do nothing? Let us mean business when we pray, or we shall be mockers of the Divine Majesty! Too many come before God and ask for everything in general but nothing in particular—and they get but scant answers to their pointless prayers.

Many more are very slack in prayer and, therefore, they starve their souls. Many angels must go up if many are to come down! Prayer must be constant and real with us. We should live as if we really had power with God, as if like, Elijah, we could go the top of Carmel and pray a bronze sky away and deluge the earth with showers of blessings! Are you unable so to live like this? Then the fault lies at your own door.

What was next? Nathanael was to see angels descending upon the Son of Man, that is to say, he was to see heavenly spirits and blessings coming down to man by Jesus Christ. He who truly believes in Christ and is without guile, shall have continual blessings from on high—all Heaven shall be opened to him! God will help him by Providence; will help him by Grace; will help him by actual angels and will help him spiritually by the all power which He has given unto Christ in Heaven and in earth. How earnestly do I desire that this Church, this morning, may see for itself what my eyes have seen for myself—for my faith sees Heaven opened to supply the needs of Christ's work and all the might of God working to achieve His purposes!

I am just entering upon another work for God. We have had enough of these enterprises, some say, why not wait? I am forced to go forward and onward! I must go, nor do I fear, for lo, I see Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending, by the way of Christ Jesus, to bring us help! We may venture. There is no venture in it—we may trust God for anything! We may trust God for everything and just go straight on! It looks like walking on water, sometimes, to trust Christ—especially about gold and silver—but we need not fear! The waters shall be a sea of glass beneath our feet if we can but simply trust!

But oh, we must purge ourselves! We must be without guile! There must be no self-seeking! There must be a simple-hearted desire for God's Glory and for nothing else! We must sink self—Christ must reign! And then we must trust and go forward. I hope we are right in this matter. And if so, we shall see the salvation of God! Nothing can stop us. Behold, this day all things work together for good to them that love God. The stones of the field are in league with us! Yes, it is not on earth, alone, that we find allies, but the stars in their courses fight against our foes and all Heaven is on the stir to befriend us in the service of God! See how the ladder swarms with coming and going angels! Heaven surrounds those who are doing Heaven's work! God Himself is with us, for our Captain and His host, which is very great, is round about us even as horses of fire and chariots of fire were round about the Prophet.

All things shall be given that are needed and as our day, our strength shall be. Brace yourselves, my Brothers and Sisters, for a new endeavor! Be strong in the Lord and you shall see greater things than these. Full of weakness, yet stand in His strength, each one, and play the man! Say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." Omnipotence is waiting to gird your loins! Buckle it about you and become mighty through God! Our Head, Christ Jesus, has all power in Heaven and in earth and that power He pours into all His members!

By faith I commit myself and I trust, also, my beloved Church and Friends, to farther efforts for our Lord, relying upon His Word, "You shall see greater things than these," and fully believing that through Christ Jesus all the forces of Heaven are in alliance with us and the will of the Lord shall surely be accomplished!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

John 1:35—51; Genesis 28:10—22.

[Mr. Spurgeon alludes to the Girls' Orphanage. The fund has just com

menced and land has been purchased. A large amount will be needed, but there is a great God to look to!]

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John 2,5 #2317 - Obeying Christ's Orders

OBEYING CHRIST'S ORDERS

NO. 2317

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 16, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 1889.

"His mother said unto the servants, Whatever He says unto you, do it."

John 2:5.

IT does not need a strong imagination to picture Mary, probably at that time the widowed mother of our Lord. She is full of love and of a naturally kind, sympathetic disposition. She is at a marriage and she is very pleased that her Son is there, with the first handful of His disciples. Their being there has made a greater demand upon the provisions than was expected and the supply is running short, so she, with an anxiety that was natural to such a mother of her years, and of her gentle spirit, thinks that she will speak to her Son and tell Him that there is a need. So she says to Him, "They have no wine."

There was not much amiss in that, surely, but our Lord, who sees not as man sees, perceived that she was putting to the front her motherly relationship at a time when it was necessary that it should be in the background. How necessary it was, history has shown, for the apostate church of Rome has actually made Mary a Mediatrix and prayers have been addressed to her! She has even been asked to use her maternal authority with her Son. It was well that our Savior should check anything that might tend to give any countenance to Mariolatry which has been altogether so mischievous. And it was necessary for Him to speak to His mother with somewhat more of sharpness than, perhaps, her conduct, in itself, alone, might have required. So her august Son felt bound to say to her, "Woman, what have I to do with you in such a matter as this? I am not your Son as a miracle-worker. I cannot work to please you. No, if I work a miracle as the Son of God, it cannot be as your Son—it must be in another character. What have I to do with you in this matter?" And He gives His reason—"My hour is not yet come."

It was a gentle rebuke, absolutely necessary from the prescience of all that would follow. You can easily picture how Mary took it. She knew Christ's gentleness, His infinite love, how for 30 years there had never come anything from Him that had grieved her spirit. So she drank in the reproof and gently shrank back, thinking much more than she said, for she was always a woman who laid up these things and pondered them in her heart. She says very little, but she thinks a great deal—and we see in her later conduct, in respect to this very miracle, that she thought very much of what Jesus had said to her. Brothers and Sisters, you and I, with the very best intentions, may

sometimes err towards our Lord. And if He,

Volume 39 1then, in any way rebukes us, and puts us back—if He disappoints our hope, if He does not allow our ambitious designs to prosper—let us take it from Him as Mary took it from Jesus. Let us just feel that it must be right and let us, in silence, possess ourselves in His Presence.

Notice, then, this holy woman's quietude, ceasing to say a word, quietly drinking it all in. And then observe her wise admonition to the servants who were there to wait at the feast. Inasmuch as she had run before Him, she would have them to follow after Him and she very wisely and kindly says to them, "Whatever He says unto you, do it. Do not go to Him with any of your remarks. Do not try to press Him forward. Do not urge Him on—He knows better than we do. Stand back and wait till He speaks, and then be quick to obey every single word that He utters." Beloved, I wish that when we have learned a lesson, we would try to teach it. Sometimes our Master gives us a sharp word all to ourselves and we would not tell anybody else what He has said. In our private communions He has spoken to our conscience and to our heart—and we need not go and repeat that, as Mary did not. But, having learned the lesson well, let us then say to our next friend, "Do not err as I have done. Avoid the rock on which I struck just now. I fear that I grieved my Lord. My Sister, I would not have you grieve Him. My Brother, I would try to tell you just what to do that you may please Him in all things." Do you not think that we would minister to mutual edification if we did that? Instead of telling the faults of others, let us extract the essence from the discoveries which we make of our own errors and then administer that as a helpful medicine to those who are around us.

This holy woman must have spoken with a good deal of power. Her tone must have been peculiarly forcible and her manner must have made a great impression upon the servants, for you notice that they did exactly what she told them. It is not every servant who will let a guest come into the house and set up to be mistress. But so it was when she spoke to those servants, with her deep, earnest tones, as a woman who had learned something that she could not tell, but who, yet, out of that experience, had extracted a lesson for others. She must have spoken with a wonderful melting force when she said to them, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." And they were all looking on with awe after she had spoken, drinking in her message to them as she had drunk in the message of the Lord.

Now I want, tonight, to try to teach that lesson to myself and to you. I think that our own experience goes to show us that our highest wisdom, our very best prosperity, will lie in our cautiously keeping behind Christ and never running before Him, never forcing His hand, never tempting Him as they did who tempted God in the wilderness—prescribing to Him to do this or that—but, in holy, humble obedience, taking these words as our life motto henceforth, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I will handle my text in this way—First, What? Secondly, Why? Thirdly, What then?

I. WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE HERE TOLD TO DO? In a word, it is to obey. You who belong to Christ and are His disciples, take heed to this word of exhortation, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I want you to notice, first of all, that these words were spoken, not to the disciples of Christ, but to the servants who, in the Greek, are here called diakonois, the persons who were brought in to wait at the table and to serve the guests. I know not whether they were paid servants, or whether they were friends who kindly volunteered their services, but they were the waiters at the feast. They were not told to leave their master. They were not told to give up their avocation as waiters.

They were servants and they were to continue servants, but still, for all that, they were to acknowledge Christ as their Master without casting off their obedience to the governor of the feast. Mary does not say to these people, "Put down those pots. Leave off carrying those dishes." But while they continue to do what they were doing, she says to them, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I thought that point was well worthy of our notice, that these servants, still abiding as they were, yet were to render obedience to Christ.

That obedience, in the first place, would be prepared obedience. Mary came to get their minds ready to do what Christ should bid them. No man will obey Christ on a sudden and keep on doing so. There must be a weighing, a considering. There must be a thoughtful, careful knowledge of what His will is—and a preparedness of heart—that whatever that will may be, as it is known, so it shall be done! At first these servants did nothing. The guests needed wine but the servants did not go to Jesus and say, "Master, wine is needed." No, but they waited until He bade them fill the waterpots with water—and then they filled them to the brim. But they did nothing till He bade them. A great part of obedience lies in not doing. I believe that in the anxiety of many a trembling heart, the very best faith will be seen in not doing anything. When you do not know what to do, do nothing, and, doing nothing, my Brothers and Sisters, will be found to be, sometimes, the very hardest work of all. In the case of a man in business who has come into a difficulty, or of a Sister with a sick child, or a sick husband, you know the impulse is to do something or other. If not the first thing that comes to hand, yet we feel that we must do something. And many a person has aggravated his sorrow by doing something, when, if he had bravely left it alone, believingly left it in God's hands, it would have been infinitely better for him.

"Whatever He says unto you, do it." But do not do what every whim or fancy in your poor brain urges you to do! Do not run before you are sent. They who run before God's cloud will have to come back, again—and they will be very happy if they find the way back! Where Scripture is silent, be you silent! If there is no command, you had better wait till you can find some guidance. Blunder not on with a headlong anxiety lest you tumble into the ditch! "Whatever He says unto you," do that. But until He speaks, sit still. My Soul, be patient before God and wait until you know His bidding!

This prepared obedience was to be the obedience of the spirit, for obedience lies mainly there. True obedience is not always seen in what we do, or do not do, but it is manifest in the perfect submission to the will of God—and the strong resolve that saturates the spirit through and through—that what He bids us, we will do! Let your obedience, in the next place, be perfect obedience. "Whatever He says unto you, do it." It is disobedience, and not obedience which prompts us to select from the commands of Christ which ones we care to obey. If you say, "I will do what Christ bids me as far as I choose," you have, in fact, said, "I will not do what Christ bids me, but I will do what I please to do." That obedience is not true which is not universal! Imagine a soldier in the army who, instead of obeying every command of his captain, omits this and that, and says that he cannot help it, or that he even means to omit certain things. Beloved, take heed of throwing any precept of your Lord upon the dunghill! Every Word that He has spoken to you is more precious than a diamond! Prize it! Store it up. Wear it. Let it be your ornament and your beauty. "Whatever He says unto you, do it," whether it relates to the Church of God and its ordinances, or to your walk out of doors among your fellow men, or to your relationship in the family, or to your own private service for the Lord. "Whatever." See, there are to be no trimmings,

here, no cutting off of certain things—"Whatever He says unto you, do it." Breathe this prayer at the present moment, "Lord, help me to do whatever You have said! May I have no choice! May I never let my own will come in to interfere, but if You have told me do anything, enable me to do it, whatever it may be!"

This obedience, then, being prepared and perfect, is to also be practical obedience—"Whatever He says unto you, do it." Do not think about it, especially for a very long time, and then wait until it is more impressed upon you, or till there is a convenient season. "Whatever He says unto you, do it." One of the great evils of the times is that of deliberating about a plain command of Christ and asking, "What will be the result of it?" What have you to do with results? "But if I follow Christ in all things, I may lose my job!" What have you to do with that? When a soldier is told to go up to the cannon's mouth, he is very likely to lose his "job" and something else—but he is bound to do it! "Oh, but I might lose my opportunities of usefulness!" What do you mean? That you are going to do evil that good may come? That is what it comes to. Will you really, before God, look that matter in the face? "Whatever He says unto you, do it." At any expense, at any risk, do it!

I have heard some say, "Well, I do not like doing things in a hurry." Very well, but what says David? "I made haste, and delayed not—to keep Your Commandments." Remember that we sin every moment that we delay to do anything commanded by Christ. Whether every moment of delay is a fresh sin, I cannot say, but if we neglect any command of His, we are living in a condition of perpetual sinning against Him—and that is not a desirable position for any of Christ's disciples to live in! Beloved, "whatever He says unto you, do it." Do not argue against it and try to find some reason for not doing it. I have known some Believers who have not liked to have certain passages of Scripture read at the family altar because they have rather troubled their consciences. If there is anything in the Bible that quarrels with you, you are wrong—the Bible is not! Come to terms with it at once and the only terms will be obey, obey, obey your Lord's will! I am not holding this up to you as a way of salvation—you know I would never think of doing that! I am speaking to those of you who are saved! You are Christ's servants—His saved ones! And now you have come to the holy discipline of His house and this is the rule of it, "Whatever He says unto you, do it."

Do it practically. Have we not been talking too much about what should be done by our friends, or observing what others do not do? Oh, that the Spirit of God would come upon us that our own walk might be close with God, our own obedience be precise and exact, our own love to Christ be proved by our continual following in His steps! Ours should be practical obedience.

It must also be personal obedience—"Whatever He says unto you, do it." You know how much there is done by proxy, nowadays. Charity is done so. A is in a great deal of need. B hears of it and is very sorry, indeed. And so he asks C to come and help A. And then B goes to bed and feels that he has done a good thing! Or else when A has told his story to B, B looks out to see if there is some Society that will help him, although he never subscribes to the Society because he does not think of doing that! His part is just to pass A on to C, or to the Society and, having done that, he feels satisfied. Do you wish the Savior to say, in the Last Great Day, "I was hungry, and you sent Me to somebody else," or, "I was thirsty and you directed Me to the parish pump for a drink"? Nothing of the kind! We must do something personally for Christ.

So is it in the matter of endeavoring to win souls to Christ. There is nothing like personally speaking to people, button-holing them, looking them in the eyes, talking your own personal

experience over with them and pleading with them to fly to Christ for refuge! Personal obedience is what is needed. If one of these persons who were waiting had said, when the command had come from Christ to fill the waterpots, "John, you go and do it. William, you go and do it"—he would not have followed out Mary's command, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." Do I touch the conscience of anybody here? Well, if so, from this time forth cease to be a servant of God by proxy lest you be saved by proxy—and to be saved by proxy will be to be lost! But trust Christ for yourself and then serve Him for yourself, by His own mighty Grace—"Whatever He says unto you, do it."

It must also be prompt obedience. Do it at once—delay will take the bloom from the obedience. "Whatever He says unto you," stand ready to obey. The moment that the command, "March," is given to the soldier, he marches. The moment a command comes to your heart and you see it to be really in the Word of God, do it! Oh, the murdered resolutions that lie round about most men's lives! What they would have done! What they could have done, if they had but done it! But they have been building castles in the air, imagining lives they would like to lead and not actually doing Christ's commands. Oh, for a prompt, personal, practical service to the Lord Jesus Christ!

And in our case it is to be perpetual obedience. Mary said to these waiters, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." "Keep on doing it. Not only the first thing He says, but whatever He says unto you. As long as this feast lasts and He is here, do what my Son commands you." So, Beloved, as long as we are in this world, until life's last hour, may the Holy Spirit enable us to do just what Jesus bids us do! Can you say, my Brothers and Sisters—

"Jesus, I my cross have taken, All to leave, and follow You"?

Is it your wish that until you enter into His rest, you should always bear His yoke and follow His footsteps? Temporary Christians are not Christians! Those who ask for furlough from this Divine service have never entered it. We have put on our uniform to never take it off. As certain old knights in times of war slept in their armor and had the lance and shield always ready to hand, so must the Christian be, from this time forth and forever. "Ours not to reason why," ours not to delay when the command comes, but ours, while there is breath in our body, and life in our spirit, to serve Him who has redeemed us with His precious blood!

Thus I have feebly set before you what it is that we are called to do— that is, to obey Christ's orders.

II. Now for a few minutes let us ask, WHY IS THIS TO BE DONE? Beloved, why were these men to do what Jesus told them? Let that melt into, "Why are you and I to do what Jesus tells us?"

First, Christ is, by Nature, worthy of obedience. I count it an honor to serve Christ. Oh, what is He? Perfect Man, rising nobly above us all! Perfect God, infinitely majestic in His two Natures. Why, it seems to me as if we ought to love to do His bidding and long to be conformed to His image! Here is the rest for our aspiring spirit. Here are the glory and the honor and the immortality for which we pant! By the glory of Christ, whom you adore unseen, "Whatever He says unto you, do it."

Beside that, Christ is our only hope. All our prospects for the future depend upon Him. Glory be to His blessed name! There is none like He. If He were gone from us and we could not trust in Him, life would be an endless darkness, an abyss of woe! By all the glory of His Nature and all that we

owe to Him, and all that we look for from Him, I charge you, beloved Friends, "Whatever He says unto you, do it."

More than that, He is All-Wise, and so fit to lead. Who but He could get these people out of their trouble at the feast when they needed wine? He knew the way out of it all—a way that would manifest His own Glory, make His disciples believe in Him and make everybody round about happy. But if He did not show the way, nobody could. So let us obey Him, for His commands are so wise. He never has made a mistake and He never will. Let us commit our way unto His keeping and whatever He says unto us, let us do it!

Besides, Beloved, Christ has rewarded our obedience before. Did you ever act rightly and, after all, find it a mistake? Some of us have had to do very grievous things in our time that have gone sorely against the grain. Would we do them again? Yes, that we would, if they cost 10 times as much! No man has ever, in looking back, regretted that he followed the voice of conscience and the dictates of God's Word—and he never will, though he should even go to prison and to death for Christ's sake! You may lose for Christ, but you shall never lose by Christ! When all comes to be added up, you shall be a greater gainer because of the apparent loss. He has never deceived you and never misled you. Obedience to Him has always brought you real solid peace. Therefore, "whatever He says unto you, do it."

Yet once more, Christ is our Master and we must obey Him. I hope, Beloved, that there is no one among us here who would call Him, Master, and yet not do the things that He says. We do not talk about Him as one who was once great, but who is gone away and whose influence is now upon the wane because He is not up to "the spirit of the age." No, but He still lives and we still commune with Him. He is our Master and Lord! When we were baptized into His death, it was no mere matter of form—but we were dead to the world and we lived to Him. When we took His sacred name upon us and were called Christians, it was no sham—we meant that He should be Captain, King and Master of our spirits! He is no Baali, that is, domineering lord but He is Ishi, our Man, our Husband and, in His husbandly relationship He is Lord and Governor of every thought and every motion of our nature! Jesus, Jesus, Your yoke is easy and your burden is light! It is joyous to bear it! To get away from it would be misery, indeed, and that is one reason why I say to you, tonight, "Whatever He says unto you, do it," because if you do not, you cast off your allegiance to Him—and what are you going to do, then?

To whom will you go if you turn away from Him? Every man must have a master. Will you be your own master? You cannot have a greater tyrant! Will you let the world be your master? Are you going to be a servant of "society"? There are no worse slaves than these! Are you going to live for self, for honor, for what is called, "pleasure"? Ah, me, you may as well go down to Egypt, to the iron furnace, at once! To whom can we go? Jesus, to whom can we go, if we go away from You? You have the words of eternal life! "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Throw another bond of love about me, another cord of sweet constraint and let me never ever think of parting with You! Let me be crucified to the world and the world to me!

Do not your hearts pray after that fashion? Oh, to be wholly Christ's, entirely Christ's, forever Christ's! Yes, yes, we will listen to the command, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I have given you the reason why we should obey Christ's orders.

III. And now, Beloved, let me occupy the last few minutes in answering this question, WHAT WILL FOLLOW FROM THIS OBEDIENCE? Suppose we do whatever Christ commands us, what then? I will tell you what then.

The first thing is, that you will feel free from responsibility. The servant who has done what his master has told him, may, in his own mind, fear that some dreadful consequences may follow, but he says to himself, "It will be no fault of mine. I did what I was told to do." Now, Beloved, if you want to get rid of the whole burden of life, by faith do whatever Christ commands you! Then, if the heavens should seem about to fall, it would be no business of yours to shore them up. You have not to mend God's work and keep it right. I remember what Mr. John Wesley said to his preachers—"Now, Brothers, I do not want you to mend my rules. I want you to obey them." That is pretty strong from John Wesley, but from our Lord Jesus Christ it comes most suitably. He does not want us to get to altering, mending, touching up and looking at consequences. No! Do exactly what He tells you and you have nothing to do with the consequences! You may have to bear them, but He will give you Grace to do that—and it shall be your joy to bear all ill consequences that come of firm obedience to Christ.

This kind of doctrine does not suit the year 1889. If you go over to Scotland and see where the Covenanters' graves are, anybody who thinks according to the spirit of this age will say that they were just a lot of fools to have been so stubborn and so strict about doctrine as to die for it. Why, really, there is not anything in the new philosophy that is worth dying for! I wonder whether there is any "modern thought" doctrine that would be worth the purchase of a cat's life? According to the teaching of the broad school, what is supposed to be true, today, may not be true tomorrow, so it is not worth dying for. We may as well put off the dying till the thing is altered—and if we wait a month, it will be altered and thus, at the last, you may get the old creed back again! The Lord send it and send us yet a race of men who will obey what He bids them, do what He tells them, believe what He teaches them and lay their own wills down in complete obedience to their Lord and Master! Such a people will feel free from responsibility.

Then you shall feel a sweet flow of love to Christ. The disobedient child—well, he will not be turned out of the house because he will not do the bidding of his mother and father. But when he does not submit to the rule of the house, he has a hard time of it and he ought to have. There is that evening kiss, it is not as warm as it would have been. And that morning greeting, after long disobedience, has no happiness in it. And, indeed, the more kind father and mother are, the more unhappy he is! And the sweet love of Christ is such that it makes us unhappy in disobedience. You cannot walk contrary to Christ and yet enjoy fellowship with Him. And the more dear and near He is to you, so much the wider does the gap seem to be when you are not doing His bidding.

Besides, there is no carrying out your faith except by doing as He bids you. That faith which lies only in a creed, or in a little pious book is not good for much. Faith does what Christ bids it do and it delights to do so! It rejoices to run risks, it delights to put off from the land and get out to sea. It is glad to sacrifice itself when Jesus calls for it because faith cannot be satisfied without bearing fruit—and the fruit of faith is obedience to Him in whom we believe.

Beloved, I also think that if we will obey Christ in what He says, we shall be learning to be leaders. Wellington used to say that no man is fit to command until he has learned to obey—and I am sure that it is so. We shall never see a race of really first-rate men unless our boys and girls are made

to obey their parents in their childhood. The essential glory of manhood is lost when disobedience is tolerated and, certainly, in the Church of God, the Lord does put His leading servants through very severe ordeals. The best place for the books of a minister is not his library, but very often a sick-bed. Affliction is our school and before we can deal with others, God must deal with us. If you will not obey, you shall not be set to command. And lastly, I do believe that learning to obey is one of the preparatives for the enjoyments of Heaven. Why, in Heaven, they have no will but God's will! Their will is to serve Him and delight themselves in Him. And if you and I do not learn, here below, what obedience to God is, and practice it, and carry it out, how can we hope to be happy in the midst of obedient spirits? Dear Hearers, if you have never learned to trust Christ and obey Him, how can you go to Heaven? You would be so unhappy there that you would ask God to let you run to Hell for shelter, for nothing would strike you with more horror than to be in the midst of perfectly holy people who find their delight in the service of God! May the Lord bring us to this complete obedience to Christ! Then this world will be an inclined plane, or a ladder such as Jacob saw, up which we shall trip with holy gladness till we come to the top and find our Heaven in perfect obedience to God!

It is not Mary who speaks to you, tonight, but it is the Church of God, the mother of all who truly love Christ, and she says to you, "Whatever He says unto you, do it," and if you will do it, He will turn the water into wine for you. He will make your love more glad and happy than it ever would have been without obeying Him and He will provide for you. Obey Him and He will comfort you. Obey Him and He will perfect you. Be with Him in the ways of duty and you shall be with Him in the home of Glory!

The Lord grant this, of His infinite Grace, giving to us to know the will of Christ, and then working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

John 2:1-11.

Our Savior had lived on the earth for 30 years and had worked no miracle. There was the hiding of His power. He had been subject to His parents and had lived in obscurity. Now He has broken through the obscurity and He begins His public ministry by working a miracle.

Verse 1. And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. "The third day." John keeps a kind of diary for Christ. In those first days there was something for every day and they were a specimen of the whole life of the Savior. He could never say, like Titus, "I have lost a day." Every day had its deed—glorifying to God and blessed to men. Let us also try to labor for Christ every day—let there be no day without its mark. May God grant that there may be something to make every day memorable! "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee." The first miracle of our Lord was not worked at Jerusalem, but away there in the back settlements, in "Galilee of the Gentiles." It was necessary for Him to be seen and to work miracles which might be seen, but He began in an obscure region, among a despised people.

1. And the mother of Jesus was there. This expression leads to the belief that there was some kind of kinship between the bridegroom or the bride and the mother of Jesus, for it is not said that she was invited to be there, but that she "was there."

2. And both Jesus was called and His disciples to the marriage. Happy marriage, where Christ is invited to be present! Where Christ goes, His disciples go. If they suffer with Him, they also rejoice with Him. If He goes to a feast, they must go, too—"Both Jesus was called and His disciples." They were only five, but five is a large number to add to a poor family's wedding party. It shows the generosity of their heart that they invited Jesus to come and bring His disciples. And He went to put honor upon marriage, especially as He foresaw that the day would come when the apostate church of Rome would reckon marriage to be dishonorable and not permit one who was married to officiate as a minister.

3. And when they needed wine, the mother of Jesus said unto Him, They have no wine. I notice that John calls Mary "the mother of Jesus." I suppose he had in his mind the dying words of Christ, "Behold your mother!" Such things make a deep impression upon us and we are apt, when writing, to use the phrases that have been burnt into the memory. "The mother of Jesus." Because she has been too much exalted in the Romish church, I fear that we run to the other extreme, and think too little of this woman to whom the angel Gabriel said, "Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women." "They needed wine." They had not been long married before there was need in the house. Even in the brightest days of life, they needed something more. And when the mother of Jesus saw that they were in need and that the marriage festival would be dishonored, so she went to her Son and she said, "They have no wine." I fear she spoke a little like an ordinary mother addressing her son, but the time had come when that discipline was to end. Mary was not His mother as the Son of God. He was about to work a miracle and He would have her and all His relatives know that He would not use His miraculous powers merely for their advantage, but for the Glory of God and the instruction of men.

4. Jesus said unto her, Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come. It was a very difficult position for Him to be in—to act the part of a loving and obedient son as far as His Manhood was concerned, and yet, as the Son of God, by no means to compromise His Divine Character, but to stand out there as being under no influence of the flesh. Just as we are not to know Christ after the flesh, so He no longer knew mother, or brother, or friend, according to earthly relationship. And when Mary intruded her motherhood upon Him, it was but right and fitting that He should say, "What have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come." The Savior had an hour for everything—an hour for suffering and an hour for working. And He did everything punctually, promptly to the minute. That was one of the beauties of His life—"My hour is not yet come." Perhaps He meant, "My hour to work this miracle is not yet come" and He would not be hurried by anybody. Beloved, it is not easy to be familiar with Christ, as I trust we are, and yet always to maintain humble deference to His sacred will. Never let us pray as if we were dictators, or His equals. We must keep our place, however near we come to the dear bosom of our Lord. He is still in Heaven and we are upon earth. He is the Master, we are the servants—and if we are as favored as His mother was, we must not go too far, as she did.

5. His mother said unto the servants, Whatever He says unto you, do it. This holy woman took the rebuke in silence. She said nothing. She felt the force of Christ's words—she proved that she did by now fully believing that He would do something or other. Had He not said, "My hour is not yet come"? Did not that mean that the hour would come and that He would do something, by-and-by? So she quietly accepted His reproof. Oh, you who are in great trouble, you feel as if you could force the hand of Christ, but you must not think of doing that! Even if you could have power over

Him, you would be very foolish to use it. Let Him alone! He knows best how and when to show His Grace towards you. Keep silence before Him and in patience commit your way unto Him.

6. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. I admire the accuracy of the Holy Spirit. John does not know exactly how much these vessels held. They were not made to measure things in, so he writes, "containing two or three firkins apiece." Let us always speak correctly. Sometimes, "almost," or, "thereabouts," will be words that will save our truthfulness. Let us not speak positively when we do not know! And when the accuracy of a statement is necessary and we cannot give it in terms that are definite, let us give it in words like these, "containing two or three firkins apiece." These were great "waterpots of stone." Stone will not, as a rule, hold the flavor of anything that has been in it, like an earthen vessel would do. So these pots, which had contained nothing else but water, could not be suspected of having any lees of wine concealed therein, or any flavoring material that would make the water taste like wine. No, they were genuine stone waterpots!

7. Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. There was no fear of anything but water being there— "They filled them up to the brim." They obeyed Christ to the letter. If Christ says to you, "Fill the waterpots with water," fill them up to the brim! Never cut down His commandments—carry them out as far as the largest interpretation can go. When you are told to believe in Him, believe in Him up to the brim! When you are told to love Him, love Him up to the brim! When you are commanded to serve Him, serve Him up to the brim!

8. And He said unto them, Draw some out, now, and take it to the governor of the feast. And they took it. "Draw some out, now." "Now." He had not turned the water into wine by any incantation. He simply willed it and it was done! He said, "Draw some out, now." He did not need to leave it unnoticed because He had not worked a miracle before—and He could not really say whether this was one. He was sure it was, so He said to the servants, when they had filled the waterpots with water, "Draw some out, now. Do not bring it to Me for Me to taste it. I know what it is. Take it to the chairman of the festival, to Him who sits at the head of the table and is the judge of the wine." "And they took it." The holy confidence of Christ is admirable. May we be able, by faith, so to work, with a calm consciousness of Divine help! But notice this. Whenever the Lord fills any of you with a blessing, think that you hear Him say, "Draw some out, now." He does not fill these pots that they may be kept full. "Draw some out, now." Did you have a good time last Monday night at the Prayer Meeting? Some of us had. "Draw some out, now." Have you lived near to God of late, and are you very happy? "Draw some out, now." If He has filled you up to the brim, draw some out, now, for, if you try to store it up, it will become useless. Selfishness will poison it all!

9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not from where it came, (but the servants which drew the water knew), the governor of the feast called the bridegroom. There was no collusion, for the governor, who tasted it, did not know where it came from. And the servants, who knew where it came from, did not taste it, so that they did not know what it was like. If anybody objects to the Savior making wine, I think that the best reply is that all the wine which is made of water will do nobody any hurt—and the more of it the better! And this was so made, certainly. They say that there is a devil in every grape. There were no grapes, here! And I am afraid that there is not much of them in most of the wine that is made, nowadays—there is something worse than devil in that.

10. And said unto him, Every man at the beginning does set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse, but you have kept the good wine until now. That the governor of the feast did not understand, but he admired it and here is a picture of what our Lord always does. He gives His people the best, last. At first, the wine of the Kingdom is mingled with much bitterness—salt tears of sorrow flow into it. But it improves as we go on and when we shall drink it with Him, in the Kingdom of God, what will it be like? The joy of Christ's love on earth is Heaven, but when we get to Heaven and drink it fresh from the everlasting spring, what will that joy be? Oh, the blessedness laid up for the people of God! We pluck some of the fruit from the trees and eat it, but the fruits laid up in the fruit-chamber, to get ripe, by-and-by, are the very pick of the fruit of the Tree of Life! You who live for the world have already had your best, but, as for our feast with Christ, we go from good to better and from better to the best!

11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His Glory. Moses turned water into blood. Christ turned water into wine. One brought a curse upon the common things of daily life. The other put an added sweetness and blessing into them.

11. And His disciples believed on Him. They believed on Him before, but now they had an ocular demonstration of His Divine Power and Godhead, and they believed as they had not believed before! May you and I often make distinct progress in faith, so that it may be said of us, also, "His disciples believed on Him"!

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John 2,7 #1556 - The Waterpots at Cana

Sermon #1556 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE WATERPOTS AT CANA

NO. 1556

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water.

And they filled them up to the brim."

John 2:7.

You know the narrative. Jesus was at a wedding feast and when the wine ran short, He provided for it right bountifully. I do not think that I should do any good if I were to enter upon the discussion as to what sort of wine our Lord Jesus made on this occasion. It was wine and I am sure it was very good wine, for He would produce nothing but the best. Was it wine such as men understand by that word now? It was wine, but there are very few people in this country who ever see, much less drink, any of that beverage. That which goes under the name of wine is not true wine, but a fiery, brandied concoction of which I feel sure Jesus would not have tasted a drop. The fire-waters and blazing spirits of modern wine manufacturers are very different articles from the mildly exhilarating juice of the grape which was the usual wine of more sober centuries.

As to the wine such as is commonly used in the East, a person must drink inordinately before he would become intoxicated with it. It would be possible, for there were cases in which men were intoxicated with wine, but, as a rule, intoxication was a rare vice in the Savior's times and in the preceding ages. Had our great Exemplar lived under our present circumstances, surrounded by a sea of deadly drink which is ruining tens of thousands, I know how He would have acted. I am sure He would not have contributed by word or deed to the rivers of poisonous beverages in which bodies and souls are now being wholesale destroyed. The kind of wine which He made was such that, if there had been no stronger drink in the world, nobody might have thought it necessary to enter any protest against drinking it. It would have done nobody any harm, be sure of that, or else Jesus, our loving Savior, would not have made it.

Some have raised a question about the great quantity of wine, for I suppose there must have been no less than 120 gallons and probably more. "They did not need all that," says one, "and even of the weakest kind of wine it would be a deal too much." But you are thinking of an ordinary wedding here, are you not, where there are 10 or a dozen, or a score or two, met together in a parlor? An Oriental wedding is quite another affair. Even if it is only a village, like Cana of Galilee, everybody comes to eat and drink and the feast lasts on for a week or a fortnight. Hundreds of people must be fed, for often open house is kept. Nobody is refused and, consequently, a great quantity of

provision is required. Besides, they may not have consumed all the wine at once. When the Lord multiplied loaves and fishes, they had to eat the loaves and fishes directly or else the bread would grow moldy and the fish would be putrid. But wine could be stored and used months afterwards. I have no doubt that such wine as Jesus Christ made was as good for keeping as it was for using. And why not set the family up with a store in hand? They were not very rich people. They might sell it if they liked. At any rate, that is not my subject and I do not intend getting into hot water over the question of cold water! I abstain, myself, from alcoholic drink in every form and I think others would be wise to do the same—but of this, each one must be a guide unto himself.

Jesus Christ commenced the Gospel dispensation, not with a miracle of vengeance, like that of Moses who turned water into blood, but with a miracle of liberality, turning water into wine! He does not only supply necessities, but gives luxuries—and this is highly significant of the kingdom of His Grace. Here He not only gives sinners enough to save them, but He gives abundantly, Grace upon Grace. The gifts of the Covenant are not stinted or stunted—they are neither small in quantity nor in quality. He gives to men not only the Water of Life that they may drink and be refreshed, but "wines on the lees well-refined" that they may rejoice exceedingly! And He gives like a king, who gives lavishly, without counting the cups and bottles. As to 120 gallons, how little is that in comparison with the rivers of love and mercy which He is pleased to bestow freely out of His bountiful heart upon the most needy souls. You may forget all about the wine question and all about wine—bad, good, or indifferent—the less we have to do with it the better, I am quite sure.

And now let us think about our Lord's mercy and let the wine stand as a type of His Grace and the abundance of it as the type of the abundance of His Grace which He does so liberally bestow. Now, concerning this miracle, it may well be remarked how simple and unostentatious it was. One might have expected that when the great Lord of All came here in human form He would commence His miraculous career by summoning the scribes and Pharisees, at least, if not the kings and princes of the earth, to see the marks of His calling and the guarantees and warrants of His commission. Gathering them all together to work some miracle before them, as Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh, they might be convinced of His Messiahship.

He does nothing of the kind. He goes to a simple wedding among poor people and there, in the simplest and most natural way, He displays His Glory. When the water is to be turned into wine; when He selects that as the first miracle, He does not call, even, for the master of the feast, or for the bridegroom or for any of the guests and begin to say, "You clearly perceive that your wine is all gone. Now, I am about to show you a great marvel, to turn water into wine." No, He does it quietly with the servants—He tells them to fill the waterpots. He uses the baths—He does not ask for any new vessels, but uses what was there, making no fuss or commotion. He uses water, too, of which they had abundance and works the miracle, if I may so speak, in the most commonplace and natural style—and that is just the style of Jesus Christ.

Now, if it had been a Roman Catholic miracle, it would have been done in a very mysterious, theatrical, sensational way with no end of paraphernalia! But, being a genuine miracle, it is done just as nearly after the course of Nature as the Supernatural can go. Jesus does not have the waterpots emptied and then fill them with wine, but He goes as far with Nature as Nature will go and uses water to make the wine from it, therein following the processes of His Providences which are at work every day. When the water drops from Heaven and flows into the earth to the roots of

the vine and so swells out the clusters with ruddy juice, it is through water that wine is produced. There is only a difference as to time whether the wine is created in the cluster, or in the waterpots.

Our Lord does not call for any strangers to do it, but the ordinary servants shall bring ordinary water—and while they are drawing out the water, or what appears to them to be water—the servants shall perceive that the water has been turned into wine. Now, whenever you try to serve Jesus Christ, do not make a fuss about it because He never made any fuss in what He did, even when He was working amazing miracles! If you want to do a good thing, go and do it as naturally as you can. Be simplehearted and simple-minded. Be yourself. Do not be affected in your piety, as if you were going to walk to Heaven on stilts—walk on your own feet and bring religion to your own door and to your own fireside.

If you have a grand work to do, do it with that genuine simplicity which is next akin to sublimity, for affectation and everything that is gaudy and ostentatious, is, after all, mean and beggarly. Nothing but simple naturalness has about it a genuine beauty. And such a beauty there is about this miracle of the Savior. Let all these remarks stand as a kind of preface, for now I need to draw out the principles which are hidden in my text. And then, secondly, when I have displayed those principles, I need to show how they should be carried out.

I. "Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water." WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN OUR LORD'S MODE OF PROCEDURE? First, that as a rule, when Christ is about to bestow a blessing, He gives a command. This is a fact which your memories will help you to establish in a moment. It is not always so, but, as a general rule, a word of command goes before a word of power, or else with it. He is about to give wine and the process does not consist in saying, "Let wine be," but it begins by a command addressed to men—"Fill the waterpots with water." Here is a blind man—Christ is about to give him sight. He puts clay on his eyes and then says, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash."

There is a man with his arm swinging at his side, useless—Christ is going to restore it and He says, "Stretch forth your hand." Yes, and the principle goes so far that it holds good in cases where it would seem to be quite inapplicable, for if it is a child that is dead, He says, "Maid, arise!" Or if it is Lazarus, who by this time stinks, being four days buried, yet He cries, "Lazarus, come forth!" And thus He bestows a benefit by a command. Gospel benefits come with a Gospel precept. Do you wonder that this principle which is seen in the miracles is seen in the wonders of His Divine Grace? Here is a sinner to be saved. What does Christ say to that sinner? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Can he believe of himself? Is he not dead in sin? Brothers and Sisters, raise no such questions, but learn that Jesus Christ has bid men believe and has commissioned His disciples to cry, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

"The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent." And He bids us go and preach this Word of God—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But why command them? It is His will to do so and that should be enough for you who call yourself His disciples. It was so even in the olden times, when the Lord set forth in vision His way of dealing with a dead nation. There lay the dry bones of the valley, exceedingly many and exceedingly dry—and Ezekiel was sent to prophesy to them! What said the Prophet? "O you dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord." Is that His way of making them alive? Yes, by a command to hear—a thing which dry bones cannot do. He issues His command to the dead, the dry, the

helpless and, by its power, life comes. I pray you, be not disobedient to the Gospel, for faith is a duty, or we should not read of "the obedience of faith."

Jesus Christ, when He is about to bless, challenges men's obedience by issuing His royal orders. The same thing is true when we come away from the unconverted to Believers. When God means to bless His people and make them blessings it is by issuing a command to them. We have been praying to the Lord that He would arise and make bare His arm. His answer is, "Awake, awake, O Zion." We ask that the world may be brought to His feet and His reply is, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them." The command is, to us, the vehicle of the blessing! If we are to have the blessing of converts multiplied and Churches built up, Christ must give us the gift— it is altogether His gift, as much as it was His to turn the water into wine—yet, first of all, He says to us, "Go and proclaim My salvation unto the ends of the earth," for thus are we to fill the waterpots with water. If we are obedient to His command, we shall see how He will work—how mightily He will be with us and how our prayers shall be heard!

That is the first principle that I see here—Christ issues commands to those whom He will bless. Secondly, Christ's commands are not to be questioned, but to be obeyed. The people need wine and Christ says, "Fill the waterpots with water." Well, now, if these servants had been of the mind of the captious critics of modern times, they would have looked at our Lord a long while and objected boldly—"We do not need any water! It is not the Feast of Purifications, it is a wedding feast! We do not require water at a wedding! We shall need water when we are going up to the synagogue, or to the Temple, that we may purify our hands according to our custom—but we do not need water just now—the hour, the occasion and the fitness of things call for wine." But Mary's advice to them was sound—"Whatever He says to you, do it." Thus, too, let us neither question nor quibble, but do His bidding straight away. It may sometimes seem that Christ's command is not pertinent to the point in hand. The sinner, for instance, says, "Lord, save me! Conquer my sin in me." Our Lord cries, "Believe," and the sinner cannot see how believing in Jesus will enable Him to get the mastery over a besetting sin! There does not, at first sight, appear to be any connection between the simple trusting of the Savior and the conquest of a bad temper, or the getting rid of a bad habit such as intemperance, passion, covetousness, or lying. There is such a connection, but remember, whether you can see the connection or not, it is yours, "not to reason why," but yours to do what Jesus bids you do, for it is by way of the command that the miracle of mercy will be worked!

"Fill the waterpots with water," though what you need is wine! Christ sees a connection between the water and the wine, though you do not. He has a reason for the pots being filled with water, which reason, as yet, you do not know—it is not yours to ask an explanation, but to yield obedience! You are, in the first instance, to just do what Jesus bids you, as He bids you, how He bids you and because He bids you! And you shall find that His commandments are not grievous and in the keeping of them there is a great reward.

Sometimes these commands may even seem to be trivial. They may look as if He trifled with us. The family was in need of wine. Jesus says, "Fill the waterpots with water." The servants might have said, "This is clearly a mere putting off of us and playing with us. Why, we would be better employed in going round to these poor people's friends and asking them to contribute another skin

of wine! We would be much better employed in looking for some shop where we could purchase more—to send us to the well to fill those huge waterpots that hold so much water seems altogether a piece of child's play."

I know, Brothers and Sisters, that sometimes the path of duty seems as if it could not lead to the desired result. We want to be doing something more—that something more might be wrong, but it looks as if we could, thereby, complete our design more easily and directly and so we hanker after this uncommanded and, perhaps, forbidden course. And I know that many a troubled conscience thinks that simply to believe in Jesus is too little a thing. The deceitful heart suggests a course which looks to be more effectual. "Do some penance! Feel some bitterness! Weep a certain amount of tears! Goad your mind, or break your heart!" So cries carnal self! Jesus simply commands, "Believe." It does appear to be too little a thing to be done, as if it could not be that eternal life would be given upon putting your trust in Jesus Christ—but this is the principle we need to teach you—that when Jesus Christ is about to give a blessing, He issues a command which is not to be questioned, but to be obeyed at once. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established, but if you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. "Whatever He says unto you, do it." The third principle is this—whenever we get a command from Christ it is always wisdom to carry it out zealously. He said, "Fill the waterpots with water," and they filled them up to the brim. You know there is a way of filling a waterpot and there is another way of filling it. It is full and you cannot heap it up, but still, you can fill it up till it begins almost to run over—until the liquid trembles as if it must surely fall in a crystal cascade! It is a filling fullness. In fulfilling Christ's commands, my dear Brothers and Sisters, let us go to their widest extent. Let us fill them up to the brim! If it is, "Believe," oh, believe Him with all your might! Trust Him with your whole heart! If it is, "Preach the Gospel," to you men, preach it in season and out of season and preach the Gospel—the whole of it. Fill it up to the brim! Do not give the people a half Gospel. Give them a brimmingover Gospel! Fill the vessels up to the very brim.

If you are to repent, ask to have a hearty and a deep repentance—full to the brim. If you are to believe, ask to have an intense, absolute, childlike dependence, that your faith may be full to the brim. If you are bid to pray, pray mightily— fill the vessel of prayer up to the brim! If you are to search the Scriptures for blessing, search them from end to end! Fill the Biblereading vessel up to the brim! Christ's commands are never meant to be done in a half-hearted manner. Let us throw our whole soul into whatever He commands us, even though, as yet, we cannot see the reason why He has given us the task. Christ's commands should be fulfilled with enthusiasm and carried out to the extreme, if extreme is possible.

The fourth principle is that our earnest action in obedience to Christ is not contrary to our dependence upon Him, but it is necessary to our dependence upon Him. I will show you that in a moment. There are some Brothers, I know, who say, "Ha! You hold what you call 'revival services' and you try to arouse men by earnest appeals and exciting addresses. Do you not see that God will do His own work? These efforts are just your trying to take the work out of God's hands. The proper way is to trust in Him and do nothing!" All right, Brother. We have your word for it—that you trust in Him and do nothing. I take the liberty not to be so very certain that you trust Him, for if I remember who you are and I think I have been to your house—you are about the most miserable, desponding, unbelieving person that I know! You do not even know whether you are saved, yourself, nine times out of ten!

Well now, I think you should hardly come and cry yourself up for your faith. If you had such a wonderfully great faith, there is no doubt, whatever, that according to your faith it would be unto you. How many have been added to your Church through your doing nothing this year—that blessed Church of yours where you exercise this blessed faith without works? How many have been brought in? "Well, we do not have very many additions." No, and I think you are not likely to have! If you go about the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom by inaction, I do not think that you go the way to work which Jesus Christ approves!

But we dare to say to you that we who go in for working for Christ with all our heart and soul, using any means within our reach to bring men in to hear the Gospel, feel as much as you do that we cannot do anything at all in the matter apart from the Holy Spirit and we trust in God, I think, almost as much as you do, because our faith has produced rather more results than yours has done! I should not wonder if it turns out that your faith without works is dead, being alone, and that our faith, having works with it, has been living faith, after all.

I will put the case thus—Jesus Christ says, "Fill the waterpots with water." The orthodox servant says, "My Lord, I fully believe that You can make wine for these people without any water and, by Your leave, I will bring no water. I am not going to interfere with the work of God. I am quite certain that You do not need our help, gracious Lord. You can make these waterpots be full of wine without our bringing a single bucket of water and so we will not rob You of the Glory of it. We will just stand back and wait for You. When the wine is made, we will drink some of it and bless Your name. But meanwhile we pray You excuse us, for pails are heavy carrying and a good many must be brought to fill all those waterpots. It would be interfering with the Divine work and so we would rather take our ease."

Do you not think that servants who talked so would prove that they had no faith in Jesus at all? We will not say that it would prove their unbelief, but we will say that it looks very much like it. But look at the servant there who, as soon as Jesus commands, "Fill the waterpots with water," says, "I do not know what He is doing. I do not see the connection between fetching this water and providing the feast with wine, but I am off to the well. Here, hand me a couple of pails. Come along, Brother. Come along and help fill the baths." There they go and soon come joyfully back with the water, pouring it into the troughs till they are full up to the brim! Those seem to me to be the believing servants who obey the command— not understanding it, but expecting that, somehow or other, Jesus Christ knows the way to work His own miracle! By our earnest exertions we are not interfering with Him, dear Friends! Far from it. We are proving our faith in Him if we work for Him as He bids us work and trust in Him, alone, with undivided faith.

The next principle I must lay equal stress upon is this—our action, alone, is not sufficient. That we know, but let me remind you of it again. There are these waterpots, these troughs, these baths—they are full and could not be fuller. What a spilling of water there is! You see that in their trying to fill them the water runs over here and there. Well, all these six great baths are full of water. Is there any more wine, for all that? Not a drop. It is water that they brought, nothing but water and it remains water, still. Suppose that they should take that water into the feast? I am half afraid that the guests would not have thought cold water quite the proper liquid to drink at a wedding!

They ought to have done so, but I am afraid they were not educated in the school of total abstinence. They would have said to the master of the feast, "You have given us good wine and water is a poor finish for the feast." I am sure it would not have done. And yet water it was, depend upon it! And nothing else but water when the servants poured it into the pots. Even so, after all that sinners can do and all that saints can do, there is nothing in any human effort which can avail for the saving of a soul till Christ speaks the Word of Power. When Paul has planted and Apollos watered, there is no increase till God gives it! Preach the Gospel, labor with souls, persuade, entreat, exhort—but there is no power in anything that you do until Jesus Christ displays His Divine might. His Presence is our power! Blessed be His name, He will come and if we fill the waterpots with water, He will turn it into wine! Only He can do it and those servants who show the most alacrity in filling up the waterpots are among the first to confess that it is He, alone, who can perform the deed!

And now the last principle here is that although human action, in itself, falls short of the desired end, yet it has its place and God has made it necessary by His appointment. Why did our Lord have these waterpots filled with water? I do not say that it was necessary that it should have been done. It was not absolutely necessary in itself, but in order that the miracle might be all open and above board it was necessary, for suppose He had said, "Go to those waterpots and draw out wine"? Those who watched Him might have said that there was wine there, already, and that no miracle was worked. When our Lord had them filled up with water, there remained no room for any wine to be hidden away. It was just the same as with Elijah, when, in order to prove that there was no concealed fire upon the altar at Carmel, he bade them go down to the sea and bring water and pour it upon the altar and upon the victim till the trenches were filled.

He said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time and no possibility of deception remained. And so, when the Lord Jesus bade the servants fill the waterpots with water, He put it beyond all possibility that He should be charged with deception—and thus we see why it was necessary that they should be filled with water. Moreover, it was necessary because it was so instructive to the servants. Did you notice, when I was reading it, that the master of the feast, when he tasted the good wine, did not know where it came from? He could not make it out and he uttered an expression which showed his surprise, mingled with his ignorance. But it is written, "The servants which drew the water knew."

Now, when souls are converted in a Church, it happens much in the same way with certain of the members who are good people, but they do not know much about the conversion of sinners. They do not feel much joy in revivals. In fact, like the elder brother, they are rather suspicious of these wild characters being brought in—they consider themselves to be very respectable and they would rather not have the lowest of people sitting in the pew with them. They feel awkward in coming so near them. They know little about what is going on. "But the servants which drew the water knew"—that is to say, the earnest Believers who do the work and try to fill the waterpots know all about it! Jesus bade them fill the vessels with water on purpose so that the men who drew the water might know that it was a miracle.

I guarantee you if you bring souls to Christ, you will know His power! It will make you leap for joy to hear the cry of the penitent and mark the bright flash of delight that passes over the new-born Believer's face when his sins are washed away and he feels himself renewed! If you want to know

Jesus Christ's miraculous power, you must go and—not work miracles—but just draw the water and fill the waterpots. Do the ordinary duties of Christian men and women—things in which there is no power of themselves, but which Jesus Christ makes to be connected with His Divine working and it shall be for your instruction and your comfort that you had such work to do! "The servants which drew the water knew." I think that I have said enough upon the principles which lie concealed within my text.

II. You must have patience with me while I try to apply these principles to practical purposes. LET US SEE HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS DIVINE COMMAND, "Fill the waterpots with water." First, use in the service of Christ such abilities as you have. There stood the water pots—six of them and Jesus used what He found ready to His hand. There was water in the well—our Lord also used that. Our Lord is accustomed to employ His own people and such abilities as they have rather than angels or a novel class of beings created fresh for the purpose.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you have no golden chalices, fill your earthen vessels. If you cannot consider yourselves to be goblets of rarest workmanship in silver, or if you could not liken yourselves to the best Sevres ware, it does not matter—fill the vessels which you have. If you cannot, with Elijah, bring fire from Heaven, and if you cannot work miracles with the Apostles, do what you can! If you have no silver and gold, yet such as you have, dedicate to Christ. Bring water at His bidding and it will be better than wine! The most common gifts can be made to serve Christ's purpose. Just as He took a few loaves and fishes and fed the crowd with them, so will He take your six waterpots and the water and do His wine-making! Thus, you see, they improved what they had, for the waterpots were empty and they filled them.

There are a good many Brothers here from the College tonight and they are trying to improve their gifts and their abilities. I think you do right, my Brothers. But I have heard some people say, "The Lord Jesus does not need your learning." No, it is very likely that He does not, any more than He needed the water. But then He certainly does not need your stupidity and your ignorance and He does not need your rough, uncultivated ways of speaking! He did not seek for empty pitchers on this occasion—He would have them full and the servants did well to fill them. Our Lord today does not need empty heads in His ministers, nor empty hearts. So, my Brothers, fill your waterpots with water! Work away and study away and learn all you can and fill the waterpots with water.

"Oh," somebody will say, "but how are such studies to lead to the conversion of men? Conversion is like wine and all that these young fellows will learn will be like water." You are right! But still, I bid these students fill the waterpots with water and expect the Lord Jesus to turn the water into wine. He can sanctify human knowledge so that it shall be useful to the setting forth of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. I hope that the day has gone by when it is so much as dreamed that ignorance and coarseness are helpful to the Kingdom of Christ. The great Teacher would have His people know all that they can know and especially know Himself and the Scriptures that they may set Him forth and proclaim His Gospel. "Fill the waterpots with water."

Next, to apply this principle, let us all use such means of blessing as God appoints. What are they? First, there is the reading of the Scriptures. "Search the Scriptures." Search them all you can. Try to understand them. "But if I know the Bible, shall I be, therefore, saved." No, you must know Christ Himself by the Spirit. Still, "fill the waterpots with water." While you are studying the Scriptures you may expect the Savior will bless His own Word and turn the water into wine. Then

there is attendance upon the means of Grace and hearing a Gospel ministry. Mind you, fill that waterpot with water. "But I may hear thousands of sermons and not be saved." I know it is so, but your business is to fill this waterpot with water and while you are listening to the Gospel, God will bless it, for, "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Take care to use the means which God appoints.

Since our Lord has appointed to save men by the preaching of the Word, I pray that He will raise up those who will preach without ceasing, in season and out of season, indoors and in the streets. "But they won't be saved by our preaching." I know that. Preaching is the water—and while we are preaching, God will bless it and turn the water into wine. Let us distribute religious books and tracts. "Oh, but people won't be saved by reading them." Very likely not, but while they are reading them, God may bring His Truth to remembrance and impress their hearts. "Fill the waterpots with water." Give away abundance of tracts! Scatter religious literature everywhere. "Fill the waterpots with water," and the Lord will turn the water into wine.

Remember the Prayer Meeting. What a blessed means of Grace it is, for it brings down power for all the works of the Church—fill that waterpot with water! I have not to complain of your attendance at Prayer Meetings, but oh, keep it up, dear Brothers and Sisters! You can pray. Blessed be His name, you have the spirit of prayer. Pray on! "Fill the waterpots with water" and in answer to prayer, Jesus will turn it into wine. Sunday school teachers, do not neglect your blessed means of usefulness. "Fill the waterpots with water." Work the Sunday school system with all your might. "But it will not save the children merely to get them together and teach them of Jesus. We cannot give them new hearts." Who said that you could? "Fill the waterpots with water." Jesus Christ knows how to turn it into wine and He does not fail to do it when we are obedient to His commands. Use all the means, but take care that you use those means right heartily! I come back to that part of the text—"And they filled them up to the brim." When you teach the young ones in the Sunday school, teach them well. Fill them to the brim! When you preach, dear Sir, do not preach as if you were only half awake—stir yourself up—fill your ministry to the brim! When you are trying to evangelize the community, do not attempt it in a half-hearted way, as if you did not care whether their souls were saved or not—fill them to the brim—preach the Gospel with all your might and beg for power from on high! Fill every vessel to the brim! Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well.

Nobody ever yet served Christ too well. I have heard that in some services there may be too much zeal, but in the service of Christ you may have as much zeal as you will and yet not exceed, if prudence is joined with it. "Fill the waterpots with water" and sincere work and it shall be for your instruction and your comfort that you had such work to do! "The servants which drew the water knew." "Fill the waterpots with water" and fill them to the brim. Go in for doing good with all your heart and soul and strength!

Further, in order to apply this principle, be sure to remember, when you have done all that you can do, that there is a great deficiency in all that you have done! It is well to come away from tract-distributing and Sunday school teaching and preaching and go home and get on your knees and cry, "Lord, I have done all that You have commanded me and yet there is nothing done unless You give the finishing touch! Lord, I have filled the waterpots and though I could only fill them with water, yet I have filled them to the brim. Lord, to the best of my ability I have sought to win men for

You! There cannot be a soul saved, a child converted, or any Glory brought to Your name by anything I have done, in and of myself—but, my Blessed Master, speak the miracle-working Word and let the water which fills the vessels blush into wine! You can do it, though I cannot. I cast the burden upon You."

And this leads me to the last application of the principle, which is— trust in your Lord to do the work. You see, there are two ways of filling waterpots. Suppose these people had never been commanded to fill the waterpots and their doing it had had no reference to Christ whatever? Suppose that it had been a freak of their own imagination and they had said, "These people have no wine, but they shall have a bath if they like and so we will fill the six waterpots with water"? Nothing would have come of such a proceeding. There would have stood the water. The Eton schoolboy said, "The conscious water saw its God and blushed"—a truly poetic expression—but the conscious water would have seen the servants and would not have blushed. It would have reflected their faces upon its shining surface and nothing more would have happened.

Jesus Christ Himself must come and, in present power must work the miracle. It was because He had commanded the servants to fill the waterpots with water that, therefore, He was bound, if I may use such an expression of our free King—bound to turn it into wine, for otherwise He would have been making fools of them and they, also, might have turned round and said, "Why did You give us such a command as this?" If, after we have filled the waterpots with water, Jesus does not work by us, we shall have done what He bade us and, if we believe in Him, I make bold to say that He is bound to come through for, though we should be losers and dreadful losers, too, if He did not display His power, we would have to lament, "I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing." Yet we should not be such losers as He would be, for straightway the world would affirm that Christ's commands are empty, fruitless, idle!

It would be declared that obedience to His Word brings no result. The world would say, "You have filled the waterpots with water because He told you to do it. You expected Him to turn the water into wine, but He did not do it. Your faith is vain! Your whole obedience is vain and He is not a fit Master to be served." We should be losers, but He would be a greater loser, for He would lose His Glory. For my part, I do not believe that a good word for Christ is ever spoken in vain. I am sure that no sermon with Christ in it is ever preached without results. Something will come of it—if not tonight, or tomorrow—something will come of it. When I have printed a sermon and seen it in the volume, I have, before long, been delighted to hear of souls saved by its means. And when I have not printed, but only preached a discourse, I have still thought something will come of it.

I preached Christ. I put His saving Truth into that sermon and that Seed cannot die! If it shall lie in the volume for years, like the grains of wheat in the mummy's hand, it will live and grow and bear fruit! For instance, I have heard, but lately, of a soul brought to Christ by a sermon that I preached 25 years ago! I hear almost every week of souls having been brought to Christ by sermons preached at Park Street and Exeter Hall and the Surrey Gardens and, therefore, I feel that God will not let a single faithful testimony fall to the ground. Go on, Brothers! Go on filling the waterpots with water! Do not believe that you are doing much when you have done your utmost. Do not begin to congratulate yourselves on your past success. All must come from Christ—and it will come from Christ!

Do not go to the Prayer Meeting and say, "Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but"—and so on. That is not how the passage runs! It says just the contrary and runs thus—"Paul plants, Apollos waters, but God gives the increase." The increase is surely given by God where the planting and sowing are rightly done! The servants fill the water pots—the Master turns the water into wine. The Lord grant us Grace to be obedient to His commands—especially to that command, "Believe and live!" and may we meet Him in the marriage feast above to drink of the new wine with Him forever and ever. Amen and amen!

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John 2,9-10 #225 - Satan's Banquet

SATAN'S BANQUET

NO. 225

DELIVERED OF SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 28, 1858,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"The governor of the feast called the bridegroom and said unto him,

every man at the beginning does set forth good wine. And

when men have well drunk, then that which is worse.

But you have kept the good wine until now."

John 2:9-10.

THE governor of the feast said more than he intended to say, or rather,

there is more truth in what he said than he himself imagined. This is the established rule all the world over—"the good wine first and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." It is the rule with men and have not hundreds of disappointed hearts bewailed it? Friendship first— the oily tongue, the words softer than butter and afterwards the drawn sword. Ahithophel first presents the lordly dish of love and kindness to David, then afterwards that which is worse, for he forsakes his master and becomes the counselor of his rebel son. Judas presents first of all the dish of fair speech and of kindness, the Savior partook thereof, he walked to the House of God in company with Him and took sweet counsel with Him. But afterwards there came the dregs of the wine—"He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." Judas the thief betrayed his Master, bringing forth afterwards "that which is worse."

You have found it so with many whom you thought your friends. In the heyday of prosperity, when the sun was shining and the birds were singing and all was fair and gay and cheerful with you, they brought forth the good wine. But there came a chilling frost and nipped your flowers and the leaves fell from the trees and your streams were frosted with the ice— and then they brought forth that which is worse—they forsook you and fled. They left you in your hour of peril and taught you that great truth, that "Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm." And this is the way all the world over—I say it once again—not merely with men, but with nature, too—

"Alas, for us, if you were all, And nothing beyond O earth,"

for does not this world serve us just the same? In our youth it brings forth the best wine. Then we have the sparkling eye and the ear attuned to music. Then the blood flows swiftly through the

veins and the pulse beats joyously.

But wait a little and there shall come forth afterwards that which is worse, for the keepers of the house shall tremble and the strong men shall bow themselves. The grinders shall fail because they are few, they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, all the daughters of music shall be brought low. Then shall the strong man totter—the grasshopper shall be a burden and desire shall fail—the mourners shall go about the streets. First there is the flowing cup of youth and afterwards the stagnant waters of old age, unless God shall cast into those dregs a fresh flood of His loving kindness and tender mercy, so that once again, as it always happens to the Christian, the cup shall run over and again sparkle with delight. O Christian, trust not in men, rely not upon the things of this present time, for this is evermore the rule with men and with the world— "the good wine first and when we have well drunk, then that which is worse."

This morning, however, I am about to introduce you to two houses of feasting. First, I shall bid you look within the doors of the devil's house and you will find he is true to this rule. He brings forth first the good wine and when men have well drunk and their brains are muddled therewith, then he brings forth that which is worse. Having bid you look there and tremble and take heed to the warning, I shall then attempt to enter with you into the banqueting house of our Beloved Lord and Master Jesus Christ and of Him we shall be able to say, as the governor of the feast said to the bridegroom, "You have kept the good wine until now." Your feasts grow better and not worse—Your wines grow richer, Your viands are daintier far and Your gifts more precious than before. "You have kept the good wine until now."

I. First, we are to take a warning glance at the HOUSE OF FEASTING WHICH SATAN HAS BUILT—for as wisdom has built her house and hewn out her seven pillars, so has folly its temple and its tavern of feasting, into which it continually tempts the unwary. Look within the banqueting house and I will show you four tables and the guests that sit there and as you look at those tables you shall see the courses brought in. You shall see the wine cups brought and you shall see them vanish one after another and you shall mark that the rule holds good at all four tables—first the good wine and afterwards that which is worse—yes, I shall go further—afterwards, that which is worst of all.

1. At the first table to which I shall invite your attention, though I beseech you never to sit down and drink there, sits the PROFLIGATE. The table of the profligate is a gay table. It is covered over with a gaudy crimson and all the vessels upon it look exceedingly bright and glistening. Many there are that sit there. But they know not that they are the guests of Hell and that the end of all the feast shall be in the depths of perdition. See now the great governor of the feast, as he comes in? He has a bland smile upon his face. His garments are not black, but he is girded with a robe of many colors. He has a honeyed word on his lip and a tempting witchery in the sparkle of his eye. He brings in the cup and says, "Hey, young man, drink here, it sparkled in the cup, it moves itself aright. Do you see it? It is the wine cup of pleasure."

This is the first cup at the banqueting house of Satan. The young man takes it and sips the liquor. At first it is a cautious sip. It is but a little he will take and then he will restrain himself. He does not intend to indulge much in lust, he means not to plunge headlong into perdition. There is a flower there on the edge of that cliff—he will reach forward a little and pluck it, but it is not his intention to dash himself from that beetling crag and destroy himself. Not he! He thinks it easy to put away the

cup when he has tested its flavor! He has no design to abandon himself to its intoxication. He takes a shallow draught. But O, how sweet it is! How it makes his blood tingle within him. What a fool I was not to have tasted this before! he thinks. Was ever joy like this? Could it be thought that bodies could be capable of such ecstasy as this? He drinks again. This time he takes a deeper draught and the wine is hot in his veins. Oh, how blest he thinks he is! What would he not say now in the praise of Bacchus, or Venus, or whatever shape Beelzebub chooses to assume? He becomes a very orator in praise of sin! It is fair, it is pleasant, the deep damnation of lust appears as joyous as the transports of Heaven. He drinks, he drinks, he drinks again, till his brain begins to reel with the intoxication of his sinful delight. This is the first course. Drink, O you drunkards of Ephraim and bind the crown of pride about your head and call us fools because we put your cup from us—drink with the harlot and sup with the lustful—you may think yourselves wise for so doing, but we know that after these things there comes something worse, for your vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah—your grapes are grapes of gall, the clusters are bitter. Your wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps.

Now with a leer upon his brow, the subtle governor of the feast rises from his seat. His victim has had enough of the best wine. He takes away that cup and he brings in another, not quite so sparkling. Look into the liquor. It is not beaded over with the sparkling bubbles of rapture. It is all flat and dull and insipid, it is called the cup of satiety. The man has had enough of pleasure and like a dog he vomits, and like a dog he will return to his vomit again. Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. I am now speaking figuratively of wine, as well as literally. The wine of lust brings the same redness of the eyes. The profligate soon discovers that all the rounds of pleasure end in satiety. "What?" says he, "What more can I do? There! I have committed every wickedness that can be imagined and I have drained every cup of pleasure. Give me something fresh! I have tried the theaters all round—there! I don't care so much as one single farthing for them all. I have gone to every kind of pleasure that I can conceive. It is all over. Gaiety itself grows flat and dull. What am I to do?"

And this is the devil's second course—the course of satiety—a fitful drowsiness, the result of the previous excess. Thousands there are who are drinking of the tasteless cup of satiety every day and some novel invention whereby they may kill time, some new discovery whereby they may give a fresh vent to their iniquity would be a wonderful thing to them. And if some man should rise up who could find out for them some new fashion of wickedness—some deeper depths in the deeps of the nethermost Hell of lasciviousness—they would bless his name—for having given them something fresh to excite them. That is the devil's second course. And do you see them partaking of it? There are some of you that are having a deep draught of it this morning. You are the jaded horses of the fiend of lust, the disappointed followers of the will-o-the-wisp of pleasure. God knows, if you were to speak your heart out you would be obliged to say, "There! I have tried pleasure and I do not find it pleasure. I have gone the round and I am just like the blind horse at the mill, I have to go round again. I am spellbound to the sin, but I cannot take delight in it now as I once did, for all the glory of it is as a fading flower and as the hasty fruit before the summer.

And while the feaster remains in the putrid sea of his infatuation, another scene is opening. The governor of the feast commands another liquor to be broached. This time the fiend bears a black goblet and he presents it with eyes full of hellfire, flashing with fierce damnation. "Drink of that, Sir," says he and the man sips it and starts back and shrieks, "O God! That ever I must come to

this!" You must drink, Sir! He that quaffs the first cup, must drink the second and the third. Drink, though it is like fire down your throat! Drink it, though it is as the lava of Etna in your bowels! Drink! You must drink! He that sins must suffer. He that is a profligate in his youth must have rottenness in his bones and disease within his loins. He who rebels against the Laws of God must reap the harvest in his own body here.

Oh, there are some dreadful things that I might tell you of this third course. Satan's house has a front chamber full of everything that is enticing to the eye and bewitching to the sensual taste. But there is a back chamber and no one knows, no one has seen the whole of its horrors. There is a secret chamber where he shovels out the creatures whom he has himself destroyed—a chamber beneath whose floor is the blazing of Hell and above whose boards the heat of that horrible pit is felt. It may be a physician's place, rather than mine, to tell of the horrors that some have to suffer as the result of their iniquity.

I leave that. But let me tell the profligate spendthrift that the poverty which he will endure is the result of his sin of extravagance. Let him know, also, that the remorse of conscience that will overtake him is not an accidental thing that drops by chance from Heaven—it is the result of his own iniquity. Depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters, sin carries an infant misery in its bowels and sooner or later it must be delivered of its terrible child. If we sow the seed we must reap the harvest. Thus the law of Hell's house stands—"first, the good wine, then, afterwards, that which is worse."

The last course remains to be presented. And now, you strong men who mock at the warning which I would deliver to you with a brother's voice and with an affectionate heart, though with rough language, come here and drink of this last cup. The sinner has at the end brought himself to the grave. His hopes and joys were like gold put into a bag full of holes and they have all vanished—vanished forever. And now he has come to the last. His sins haunt him, his transgressions perplex him. He is taken like a bull in a net and how shall he escape? He dies and descends from disease to damnation. Shall mortal language attempt to tell you the horrors of that last tremendous cup of which the profligate must drink and drink forever?

Look at it—you cannot see its depths—but cast an eye upon its seething surface. I hear the noise of rushing to and fro and a sound as of gnashing of teeth and the wailing of despairing souls. I look into that cup and I hear a voice coming up from its depths—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it."

And what do you say to this last course of Satan? "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Profligate! I beseech you, in the name of God, start from this table! Oh, be not so careless at your cups. Be not so asleep, secure in the peace which you now enjoy! Man, death is at the door and at his heels is swift destruction! As for you, who as yet have been restrained by a careful father and the watchfulness of an anxious mother, I beseech you shun the house of sin and folly. Let the wise man's words be written on your heart and be you mindful of them in the hour of temptation—"Remove your way far from her and come not near the door of her house—for the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb and her mouth is smoother than oil—but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death. Her steps take hold on Hell."

2. Do you see that other table yonder in the middle of the palace? Ah, good easy souls! Many of you had thought that you never went to the feast of Hell at all. But there is a table for you, too. It is covered over with a fair white cloth and all the vessels upon the table are most clean and comely. The wine looks not like the wine of Gomorrah, it moves aright, like the wine from the grapes of Eshcol. It seems to have no intoxication in it. It is like the ancient wine which they pressed from the grape into the cup, having in it no deadly poison. Do you see the men who sit at this table? How self-contented they are! Ask the white fiends who wait at it and they will tell you, "This is the table of the self-righteous—the Pharisee sits there. You may know him. He has his phylactery between his eyes. The hem of his garment is made exceeding broad. He is one of the best of the best professors." "Ah," said Satan, as he draws the curtain and shuts off the table where the profligates are carousing, "be quiet, don't make too much noise, lest these sanctimonious hypocrites should guess what company they are in. Those self-righteous people are my guests quite as much as you, and I have them quite as safely."

So Satan, like an angel of light, brings forth a gilded goblet, looking like the chalice of the table of communion. And what wine is that? It seems to be the very wine of the sacred Eucharist. It is called the wine of selfsatisfaction and around the brim you may see the bubbles of pride. Look at the swelling froth upon the bowl—"God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." You know that cup, my self-deceiving Hearers. Oh, that you knew the deadly hemlock which is mixed therein. Sin as other men do? Not you— not at all. You are not going to submit yourself to the righteousness of Christ—what need you? You are as good as your neighbors. If you are not saved, you ought to be, you think. Don't you pay everybody twentyshillings in the pound? Did you ever rob anybody in your life? You do your neighbors a good turn. You are as good as other people.

Very good! That is the first cup the devil gives and the good wine makes you swell with self-important dignity, as its fumes enter your heart and puff it up with an accursed pride. Yes! I see you sitting in the room so cleanly swept and so neatly garnished and I see the crowds of your admirers standing around the table, even many of God's own children, who say, "Oh that I were half as good as he." While the very humility of the righteous provides you with provender for your pride. Wait awhile, you unctuous hypocrite, wait awhile, for there is a second course to come. Satan looks with quite as self-satisfied an air upon his guests this time as he did upon the troop of rioters. "Ah," says he, "I cheated those gay fellows with the cup of pleasure—I gave them, afterwards, the dull cup of satiety and I have cheated you, too. You think yourselves all right, but I have deceived you twice, I have befooled you, indeed."

So he brings in a cup which sometimes, he himself does not like to serve. It is called the cup of discontent and unquietness of mind and many there are that have to drink this after all their self-satisfaction. Do you not find, you that are very good in your own esteem, but have no interest in Christ, that when you are alone and begin to turn over your accounts for eternity, that they do not square somehow—that you cannot strike the balance exactly to your own side after all, as you thought you could? Have not you sometimes found that when you thought you were standing on a rock, there was a quivering beneath your feet? You heard the Christian sing boldly—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day, For who anything to my charge shall lay? While, through Your blood, absolved I am From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

And you have said, "Well, I cannot sing that. I have been as good a Churchman as ever lived, I never missed going to my Church all these years, but I cannot say I have a solid confidence."

You had once a hope of self-satisfaction, but now the second course has come in and you are not quite so contented. "Well," says another, "I have been to my Chapel and I have been baptized and made a profession of religion, though I was never brought to know the Lord in sincerity and in truth and I once thought it was all well with me, but I want a something which I cannot find." Now comes a shaking in the heart. It is not quite so delightful as one supposed, to build on one's own righteousness. Ah, that is the second course. Wait awhile and perhaps in this world, but certainly in the hour of death, the devil will bring in the third cup of dismay at the discovery of your lost condition. How many a man who has been self-righteous all his life, has, at the last discovered that the thing whereon he placed his hope had failed him? I have heard of an army, who, being defeated in battle, endeavored to make good a retreat. With all their might the soldiers fled to a certain river, where they expected to find a bridge across which they could retreat and be in safety, but when they came to the stream, there was heard a shriek of terror—"The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!" All in vain was that cry, for the multitude hurrying on behind, pressed upon those that were before and forced them into the river, until the stream was glutted with the bodies of drowned men.

Such must be the fate of the self-righteous. You thought there was a bridge of ceremonies. That Baptism, Confirmation and the Lord's Supper made up the solid arches of a bridge of good works and duties. But when you come to die, there shall be heard the cry—"The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!" It will be in vain for you to turn round then. Death is close behind you. He forces you onward and you discover what it is to perish, through having neglected the great salvation and attempting to save yourself through your own good works. This is the last course but one. And your last course of all, the worst wine, your everlasting portion must be the same as that of the profligate. Good as you thought yourself to be, inasmuch as you proudly rejected Christ, you must drink the wine cup. The wrath of God. That cup which is full of trembling. The wicked of the earth shall wring out the dregs of that cup and drink them. And you also must drink of it as deep as they. Oh, beware in time! Put away your high looks and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

3. Some of you have as yet escaped the lash, but there is a third table crowded with most honorable guests. I believe there have been more princes and kings, mayors and aldermen and great merchants sitting at this table, than at any other. It is called the table of worldliness. "Humph," says a man, "Well, I dislike the profligate—there's my eldest son—I've been hard at work saving up money all my life and there's that young fellow, he will not stick to business—he has become a real profligate, I am very glad the minister spoke so sharp about that. As for me— there now. I don't care about your self-righteous people a single farthing. To me it is of no account at all. I don't care at all about religion in the slightest degree. I like to know whether the funds rise or fall, or whether there is an opportunity of making a good bargain. That's about all I care for." Ah, worldling, I have read of a friend of yours who was clothed in scarlet and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. Do you know what became of him? You should remember it, for the same end awaits yourself. The end of his feast must be the end of yours.

If your God is this world, depend upon it you shall find that your way is full of bitterness. Now see that table of the worldly man—the mere worldling—who lives for gain. Satan brings him in a flowing cup—"There," says he, "Young man, you are starting in business. You need not care about the conventionalities of honesty or about the ordinary old-fashioned fancies of religion—get rich as quick as ever you can. Get money—get money—honestly if you can, but, if not, get it anyhow," says the devil. And down he puts his tankard. "There," says he, "is a foaming draught for you." "Yes," says the young man, "I have abundance now. My hopes are indeed realized." Here, then, you see the first and best wine of the worldling's feast and many of you are tempted to envy this man. "Oh, that I had such a prospect in business," says one. "I'm not half so sharp as he is, I could not deal as he deals. My religion would not let me. But how fast he gets rich! O that I could prosper as he does." Come, my Brother, judge not before the time, there's a second course to come, the thick and nauseous draught of care.

The man has got his money but they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare. Wealth ill-gotten, or ill-used, or hoarded, brings canker with it—that does not canker the gold and silver—but cankers the man's heart and a cankered heart is one of the most awful things a man can have. Ah, see this money-lover and mark the care which sits upon his heart. There is a poor old woman that lives near his lodge gate. She has but a pittance a week, but she says, "Bless the Lord, I have enough!" She never asks how she is to live, or how she is to die, or how she is to be buried, but sleeps sweetly on the pillow of contentment and faith. And here is this poor fool with untold gold. He is miserable because he happened to drop a sixpence as he walked along the streets, or because he had an extra call upon his charity to which the presence of some friend compelled him to yield. Or perhaps he groans because his coat wears out too soon.

After this comes avarice. Many have had to drink of that cup—may God save any of us from its fiery drops. A great American preacher has said, "Covetousness breeds misery. The sight of houses better than our own, of dress beyond our means, of jewels costlier than we may wear, of stately equipage and rare curiosities beyond our reach—these hatch the viper brood of covetous thoughts—vexing the poor, who would be rich— tormenting the rich, who would be richer. The covetous man pines to see pleasure. He is sad in the presence of cheerfulness. And the joy of the world is his sorrow because all the happiness of others is not his. I do not wonder that God abhors him. He inspects his heart as he would a cave full of noisome birds, or a nest of rattling reptiles and loathes the sight of its crawling tenants. To the covetous man life is a nightmare and God lets him wrestle with it as best he may. Mammon might build its palace on such a heart and Pleasure bring all its revelry there, Honor all its garlands—it would be like pleasures in a sepulcher and garlands on a tomb."

When a man becomes avaricious, all he has is nothing to him. "More, more, more!" says he, like some poor creatures in a terrible fever, who cry, "Drink, drink, drink!" and you give them drink, but after they have it, their thirst increases. Like the horseleech they cry, "Give, give, give!" Avarice is a raving madness which seeks to grasp the world in its arms and yet despises the plenty it has already. This is a curse of which many have died. And some have died with the bag of gold in their hands and with misery upon their brow because they could not take it with them into their coffin and could not carry it into another world. Well, then, there comes the next course.

Baxter and those terrible old preachers used to picture the miser and the man who lived only to make gold, in the middle of Hell. And they imagined Mammon pouring melted gold down his throat, "There," say the mocking devils "that is what you wanted, you have got it now. Drink, drink, drink!" and the molten gold is poured down. I shall not, however indulge in any such terrible imaginations. But this much I know, he that lives to himself here, must perish—he who sets his affections upon things on earth, has not dug deep—he has built his house upon the sands and when the rain descends and the floods come, down must come his house and great must be the fall. It is the best wine first, however. it is the respectable man—respectable and respected—everybody honors him—and afterwards that which is worse, when meanness has beggared his wealth and covetousness has maddened his brain. It is sure to come, as sure as ever you give yourself up to worldliness.

4. The fourth table is set in a very secluded corner, in a very private part of Satan's palace. There is the table set for secret sinners and here the old rule is observed. At that table, in a room well darkened, I see a young man sitting today and Satan is the servitor, stepping in so noiselessly, that no one would hear him. He brings in the first cup—and O how sweet it is! It is the cup of secret sin. "Stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." How sweet that morsel, eaten all alone! Was there ever one that rolled so delicately under the tongue? That is the first. After that, he brings in another—the wine of an unquiet conscience. The man's eyes are opened. He says, "What have I done? What have I been doing? Ah," cries this Achan, "the first cup you brought me I saw sparkling in that a wedge of gold and a goodly Babylon garment. And I thought, 'Oh, I must have that.' But now my thought is, 'What shall I do to bide this, where shall I put it?' I must dig. Yes, I must dig deep as Hell before I shall hide it, for sure enough it will be discovered."

The grim governor of the feast is bringing in a massive bowl, filled with a black mixture. The secret sinner drinks and is confounded—he fears his sin will find him out. He has no peace, no happiness, he is full of uneasy fear. He is afraid that he shall be detected. He dreams at night that there is someone after him. There is a voice in his ear telling him, "I know all about it. I will tell it." He thinks, perhaps, that the sin which he has committed in secret will break out to his friends. The father will know it, the mother will know it. Yes, it may be even the physician will tell the tale and blab out the wretched secret. For such a man there is no rest. He is always in dread of arrest. He is like the debtor I have read of, who, owing a great deal of money, was afraid the bailiffs were after him—and happening one day to catch his sleeve on the top of a palisade, said, "There, let me go. I'm in a hurry. I will pay you tomorrow," imagining that some one was laying hold of him.

Such is the position in which the man places himself by partaking of the hidden things of dishonesty and sin. Thus he finds no rest for the sole of his foot for fear of discovery. At last the discovery comes—it is the last cup. Often it comes on earth. For be sure your sin will find you out and it will generally find you out here. What frightful exhibitions are to be seen at our police courts of men that are made to drink that last black draught of discovery. The man who presided at religious meetings, the man who was honored as a saint, is at last unmasked. And what said the judge— and what said the world of him? He is a jest and a reproach and a rebuke everywhere. But, suppose he should be so crafty that he passes through life without discovery—though I think it is almost impossible—what a cup he must drink when he stands at last before the bar of God! "Bring him forth, jailor! Dread keeper of the dungeon of Hell, lead forth the prisoner." He comes! The whole world is assembled. "Stand up, Sir! Did you not make a profession of religion? Did not

everybody think you a saint?" He is speechless. But many there are in that vast crowd who cry, "We thought him so." The book is open, his deeds are read—transgression after transgression all laid bare.

Do you hear that hiss? The righteous, moved to indignation, are lifting up their voices against the man who deceived them and dwelt among them as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Oh, how fearful it must be to bear the scorn of the universe! The good can bear the scorn of the wicked but for the wicked to bear the shame and everlasting contempt which righteous indignation will heap upon them! Oh that will be one of the most frightful things, next to the eternal endurance of the wrath of the Most High, which, I need not add, is the last cup of the devil's terrible feast with which the secret sinner must be filled, forever and ever.

I pause now, but it is just to gather up my strength to beg that anything I may have said, that shall have the slightest personal bearing upon any of my Hearers, may not be forgotten. I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, if now you are eating the fat and drinking the sweet of Hell's banquet, pause and reflect what shall the end be? "He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that sows to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." I cannot spare more time for that, most assuredly.

II. But you must pardon me while I occupy only a few minutes in taking you into the HOUSE OF THE SAVIOR, where He feasts His Beloved. Come and sit with us at Christ's table of outward providences. He does not feast His children after the fashion of the Prince of Darkness—for the first cup that Christ brings to them is very often a cup of bitterness. There are His own Beloved children, His own redeemed—who have but sorry cheer. Jesus brings in the cup of poverty and affliction and He makes His own children drink of it, till they say, "You have made me drunk with wormwood and You have filled me with bitterness." This is the way Christ begins. The worst wine first. When the sergeant begins with a young recruit, he gives him a shilling and then afterwards come the march and the battle. But Christ never takes His recruits so. They must count the cost, lest they should begin to build and not be able to relish. He seeks to have no disciples who are dazzled with first appearances. He begins roughly with them and many have been His children who have found that the first course of the Redeemer's table has been affliction, sorrow, poverty and want.

In the olden time, when the best of God's people were at the table, He used to serve them worst, for they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy and they kept on drinking of these bitter cups for many a day. But let me tell you afterwards He brought out sweeter cups for them and you that have been troubled have found it so. After the cup of affliction, comes the cup of consolation and, oh, how sweet is that! It has been the privilege of these lips to drink that cup after sickness and pain. And I can bear witness, that I said of my Master, "You have kept the best wine until now." It was so luscious that the taste did take away every taste of the bitterness of sorrow. And I said, "Surely the bitterness of this sickness is all past, for the Lord has manifested Himself to me and given me His best wine."

But, Beloved, the best wine is to come last. God's people will find it so outwardly. The poor saint comes to die. The Master has given him the cup of poverty, but now no more he drinks thereof, he is rich to all the intents of bliss. He has had the cup of sickness. He shall drink of that no more. He has had the cup of persecution but now he is glorified, together with his Master and made to sit

upon His Throne. The best things have come last to him in outward circumstances. There were two martyrs once burned at Stratford-le-Bow. One of them was lame and the other blind and when they were tied to the stake, the lame man took his crutch and threw it down and said to the other, "Cheer up, Brother, this is the sharp medicine that shall heal us. I shall not be lame within an hour of this time nor shall you be blind."

No, the best things were to come last. But I have often thought that the child of God is very much like the crusaders. The crusaders started off on their journey and they had to fight their way through many miles of enemies and to march through leagues of danger. You remember, perhaps, in history, the story that when the armies of the Duke of Bouillon came in sight of Jerusalem, they sprang from their horses, clapped their hands and cried, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem." They forgot all their toils, all the weariness of the journey and all their wounds, for there was Jerusalem in their sight. And how will the saint at last cry, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," when all sorrow and all poverty and sickness are past and he is blest with immortality! The bad wine—bad did I say? No, the bitter wine is taken away and the best wine is brought out and the saint sees himself glorified forever with Christ Jesus.

And now, we will sit down at the table of inward experience. The first cup that Christ brings to His children, when they sit at that table, is one so bitter that, perhaps, no tongue can ever describe it—it is the cup of conviction. It is a black cup, full of the most intense bitterness. The Apostle Paul once drank a little of it but it was so strong that it made him blind for three days. The conviction of his sin overpowered him totally. He could only give his soul to fasting and to prayer and it was only when he drank of the next cup that the scales fell from off his eyes.

I have drank of it, Children of God and I thought that Jesus was unkind, but, in a little while, He brought me forth a sweeter cup, the cup of His forgiving love, filled with the rich crimson of His precious blood. Oh, the taste of that wine is in my mouth this very hour, for the taste thereof is as the wine of Lebanon, that abides in the cask for many a day. Do you not remember, when, after you had drunk the cup of sorrow, Jesus came and showed you His hands and His side and said, "Sinner, I have died for you and given Myself for you. Believe on Me." Do you not remember how you believed and sipped the cup and you have believed again and took a deeper draught and said, "Blessed be the name of God from this time forth and forever. And let the whole earth say, 'Amen,' for He has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in sunder and let the captives go free"? Since then the glorious Master has said to you, "Friend, come up higher!" and He has taken you to upper seats in the best rooms and He has given you sweeter things.

I will not tell you, today, of the wines you have drunk. The spouse in Solomon's Song may supply the deficiency of my sermon this morning. She drank of the spiced wine of His pomegranate. And so have you, in those high and happy moments when you had fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. But tarry awhile, He has kept the best wine yet. You shall soon come near the banks of the Jordan and then you shall begin to drink of the old wine of the kingdom that has been barreled up since the foundation of the world. The vintage of the Savior's agony. The vintage of Gethsemane shall soon be broached for you—the old wine of the kingdom. You are come into the land "Beulah," and you begin to taste the full flavor of the wines on the lees well refined. You know how Bunyan describes the state which borders on the vale of death. It was a land flowing with milk and honey. A land where the angels often came to visit the saints and to bring bundles of

myrrh from the land of spices.

And now the high step is taken, the Lord puts His finger upon your eyelids and kisses your soul out at your lips. Where are you now? In a sea of love and life and bliss and immortality. O Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, you have indeed kept the best wine until now! My Master! I have seen You on the Sabbath, but this is an everlasting Sabbath. I have met You in the congregation, but this is a congregation that shall never break up. O my Master! I have seen the promises, but this is the fulfillment. I have blessed You for gracious providences, but this is something more than all these— You did give me grace, but now You have given me glory—You were once my shield, but You are now my sun. I am at Your right hand, where there is fullness of joy forever. You have kept Your best wine until now. All I ever had before was as nothing compared with this."

And, lastly, for only time fails me, I could preach a week upon this subject. The Table of Communion is one at which Godly children must sit. And the first thing they must drink of there is the cup of communion with Christ in His sufferings. If you would come to the Table of Communion with Christ, you must first of all drink of the wine of Calvary. Christian, your head must be crowned with thorns, your hands must be pierced—I mean not with nails, but, spiritually you must be crucified with Christ. We must suffer with Him, or else we cannot reign with Him. We must labor with Him first, we must sup of the wine which His Father gave Him to drink, or else we cannot expect to come to the better part of the feast. After drinking of the wine of His sufferings and continuing to drink of it, we must drink of the cup of His labors, we must be baptized with His Baptism, we must labor after souls and sympathize with Him in that ambition of His heart—the salvation of sinners. And after that He will give us to drink of the cup of His anticipated honors.

Here on earth we shall have good wine in communion with Christ in His resurrection, in His triumphs and His victories. But the best wine is to come at last. O chambers of communion, your gates have been opened to me. But I have only been able to glance within them. But the day is coming when on your diamond hinges you shall turn and stand wide open forever and ever. And I shall enter into the king's palace and go no more out. O Christian! You shall soon see the King in His beauty. Your head shall soon be on His bosom. You shall soon sit at His feet with Mary. You shall soon do as the spouse did, you shall kiss Him with the kisses of His lips and feel that His love is better than wine. I can conceive you, Brothers and Sisters, in the very last moment of your life, or rather, in the first moment of your life, saying, "He has kept the best wine until now."

When you begin to see Him face to face—when you enter into the closest fellowship—with nothing to disturb or to distract you, then shall you say "The best wine is kept until now."

A saint was once dying and another who sat by him said—"Farewell, Brother, I shall never see you again in the land of the living." "Oh," said the dying man, "I shall see you again in the land of the living that is up yonder, where I am going. This is the land of the dying." Oh Brothers and Sisters, if we should never meet again in the land of the dying, we have a hope that we shall meet in the land of the living and drink the best wine at last!

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John 2,9-10 #226 - The Feast of the Lord

THE FEAST OF THE LORD

NO. 226

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, NOVEMBER 28, 1858,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"The governor of the feast called the bridegroom and said unto him,

every man at the beginning does set forth good wine

and when men have well drunk, then that

which is worse. But you have kept

the good wine until now"

John 2:9-10.

I HAD exhausted my time this morning by describing the feast of Satan—how at the four tables, where the profligate sat, the self-righteous, the worldly and the secretly sinful. The course of Satan, was always on this wise—first the good wine and when men had well drunk, that which was worse. His feast diminished in its value as it proceeded and went from the bright crackling of the thorn under the pot to the blackness of darkness forever. I had then in my second point to show that the rule of Christ's banquet is just the very reverse—that Christ does always give the best wine last—that He does save the good things until the end of the feast. Not that sometimes the first cups at the table of Christ are full of wormwood and gall and are exceedingly bitter, but that if we tarry at the feast, they will grow sweeter and sweeter and sweeter, until at last, when we shall come into the land Beulah and especially when we shall enter into the city of our God, we shall be compelled to say, "You have kept the good wine until now."

Now, my dear Friends, this is a great fact, that Christ's feast increases in sweetness. When first the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed a feast for the sons of men, the first cup He set upon the table was but a very little one and it had in it but few words of consolation. You remember the inscription upon that ancient vessel, the first cup of consolation that was ever held to the sons of men—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." There was to them but little sweetness there—much to us, because we can understand it better and some to them, because God's Spirit might help them to understand it, but still in the revelation of it there seemed but little promise. As the world went on, there were greater cups of precious wine brought forth, whereof Patriarchs and ancient saints did drink. But Beloved, all the wine they ever had under the Old Testament dispensation was far behind that of which we drink. He that is least in the kingdom of Heaven is

more highly favored than he who is chief under the Old Testament dispensation.

Our fathers ate manna, but we eat the Bread that came down from Heaven. They drank of water in the wilderness, but we drink of that Living Water whereof if a man drinks he shall never thirst. It is true they had much sweetness. The cups of the ancient tabernacle had precious wine in them. There was in the outward symbol the sign and the shadow—much that was delightful to the faith of the true Believer. But we must remember that we are drinking today of that wine which Prophets and kings desired to drink, but died without a taste. They guessed its sweetness. They could by faith foresee what it would be. But lo, we are allowed to sit at the table and quaff full draughts of wines on the lees well refined, which God has given to us in this mountain, wherein He has made a feast of fat things for all people.

But, Beloved, the text still stands true of us—there is better wine to come. We are in our privileges superior to Patriarchs and kings and Prophets. God has given us a brighter and a clearer day than they had; theirs was but the twilight of the morning, compared with the noonday which we enjoy. But think not that we are come to the best wine yet. There are more noble banquets for God's Church. Who knows how long before the best of the precious wine shall be broached? Do you not know that the King of Heaven is coming again upon this earth? Jesus Christ, who came once and broached His heart for us on Calvary, is coming again, to flood the earth with glory. He came once with a sin-offering in His hand—behold, He comes no more with a sin-offering, but with the cup of salvation and of thanksgiving, to call upon the name of the Lord and joyously to take unto Himself the throne of His father David. You and I, if we are alive and remain, shall yet set that cup to our lips. And if we die, we have this privilege, this happy consolation, that we shall not be behind hand, for "the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and we shall drink of that millennial wine which Christ our Savior has reserved to the last.

Saints! You cannot tell what golden goblets those are of which you shall drink in the thousand years of the Redeemer's triumph. You cannot tell what wine, sparkling and red, that shall be, which shall come from the vintage of the hills of glory, when he whose garments are red with treading the wine-press shall descend in the great day and stand upon the earth. Why, the very thought of this cheered Job. "I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth—and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Let this rejoice and cheer you, Christian, that the good wine is kept even unto that time. And now, having shown that this is the rule of Christ in the great dispensation which He uses to all His Church I shall come to the subject of this evening, which is this—First, the fact that the Believer shall find that Christ keeps for him the best wine till the last. Secondly, the reason of Christ for so doing. And thirdly, the lesson which we ought to learn from there.

I. First, THE FACT THAT CHRIST KEEPS HIS GOOD WINE TILL LAST. I was thinking as I rode here how very true this is of some of God's people. Why there are some of God's best Beloved who have their names upon the breastplate of the great High Priest, who are purchased with His blood and are very dear to his soul. And yet they who have not known from their youth up what it is to get out of the depths of poverty. They have to live from hand to mouth, not knowing one day where another meal shall come. How many more there are of God's people that are lying on beds of affliction? Some of the most precious of God's diamonds are lying on the dunghill of disease. You may go and climb to many a chamber where you shall see the victims of all kinds of diseases,

loathsome, protracted and painful and you shall see God's dear ones languishing out a dying life.

I might point you to others of God's servants, whose days are spent in toil. There is needed for the human body and especially for the soul, a little rest and a little of the food of knowledge. But these have had so little instruction that they cannot get mental food ready for themselves. If they read they can scarce understand and they have hard bondage in this life, which makes their life bitter and hinders them from knowledge. They have to work from morning to night, with scarce a moments rest. Oh, Beloved, will it not be true of them, when death shall give them their discharge, when they shall leave this world, which has been to them, with an emphasis, a vale of tears? Will not they have to say—"You have kept the good wine until now"?

Oh, what a change for her who has come limping along these many Sabbath days to the sanctuary! For there she shall go no more up to the Lord's house limping and lame, but the "lame man shall leap like the hart," and like Miriam, she shall dance with the daughters of Israel. Ah, you may have had to suffer sickness and sorrow and pain, blindness and deafness and a thousand of this world's ills—what a change for you, when you find them all gone! No racking pains, no pining want, no anxious care. You shall not have to cry for the sunlight to penetrate your abodes, or weep because your sight is failing through incessant labor with that murderous needle. No, you shall see the light of God, brighter than the light of the sun and you shall rejoice in the beams that proceed from His countenance. You shall have no more infirmities—immortality shall have covered and swallowed them up—that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power. That which was sown disordered, full of pain and sorrow and disjointed and full of agony, shall be raised full of delectable delights, no more capable of anguish, quivering with joy and bliss unspeakable. You shall no more be poor. You shall be rich, richer than the miser's dream. You shall no more have to labor, there shall you rest upon your beds, each one of you walking in your uprightness. You shall no more suffer from neglect and scorn and ignominy and persecution. You shall be glorified with Christ, in the day when He shall come to be admired of them that love Him. What a change for such! The best wine, indeed, is kept to the last, in their case, for they have never had any good wine here to the eyes of men, though secretly they have had many a drink from the bottle of Jesus. He has often put His cordial cup to their lips. They have been like the ewe lamb that belonged to the man in Nathan's parable—they have drunk out of Christ's own cup on the earth, but still even sweeter than that cup shall be the draught which they shall receive at the last.

But, my dear Friends, although I put these first, as especially feeling the change, because we can see the difference, yet will it be true of the most favored of God's children, all of them shall say, "The best wine is kept till now." Of all the men whom I might envy, I think I should first of all envy the Apostle Paul. What a man! How highly favored! How greatly gifted! How much blessed! Ah, Paul, you could talk of revelations and of visions from on high. He heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, and he saw that which few eyes have ever seen. He was caught up into the third Heaven. What draughts of joy the Apostle Paul must have had! What looking into the deep things of God! What soaring into the heights of Heaven! Perhaps there was never a man who was more favored of God. To have his mind expanded and then to have it filled full with the wisdom and the revelation of the knowledge of the Most High.

But ask the Apostle Paul whether he believes there is anything better to come and he tells you, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face. Now we know in part, but

then shall we know even as we are known." He was evidently expecting something more than he had received. And, Brethren, he was not disappointed. There was a Heaven as much above all the enjoyments of Paul, as the enjoyments of Paul were above the depressions of his spirit, when he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are children of God who have all that they can need of this world's goods. They seem to be free from earthly care and they have faith enough to trust their God with regard to the future. Their faith is firm and strong. They have much love to the Redeemer. They are engaged in some delightful work and the Holy Spirit attends that work with great success. Their days follow steadily one after another, like the waves of the still calm sea. God is with them and they are greatly blessed. They spread out their roots by the river, their leaf also does not wither and whatsoever they do, they prosper. Whichever way they turn their hand the Lord their God is with them. In whatsoever land they put their feet they are like Joshua, that land is given to them to be an inheritance to them forever.

But, Beloved, even these shall see greater things than they have as yet beheld. High as their Master has taken them into the house of banqueting, lofty though the room is in which they now feast, the Master shall say to them, "Come up higher." They shall know more, enjoy more, feel more, do more, possess more. They shall be nearer to Christ. They shall have richer enjoyments and sweeter employments than they have had. And they shall feel that their Master has kept his good wine even until now.

Entering into particulars for a moment, very briefly, I must just observe that there are many aspects under which we may regard the heavenly state. And in each of these we shall have to say that Christ has kept the good wine until then. Here on earth the Believer esters into rest by faith—the Christian enjoys rest even in the wilderness. The promise is fulfilled— "they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods." God gives to His Beloved sleep. There is a peace that passes all understanding, which we may enjoy even in this land of turmoil, strife and alarms—a peace which the worldling knows not of, nor can he guess it—

"A holy calm within the heart, The pledge of glorious rest. Which for the Church of God remains, The end of cares, the end of pain."

But, Beloved, drink as we may of the cup of peace, the good wine is kept until a future time. The peace we drink today is dashed with drops of bitter. There are disturbing thoughts, the cares of this world will come, doubts will arise—live as we may in this world, we must have disquietudes, thorns in the flesh must come. But, oh, the rest that remains for the people of God! What good wine shall that be! God has a sun without a spot, a sky without a cloud, a day without a night, a sea without a wave, a world without a tear. Happy are they who, having passed through this world, have entered into rest and ceased from their own works, as God did from His, bathing their weary souls in seas of heavenly rest.

View Heaven under another aspect. It is a place of holy company. In this world we have had some good wine of sweet company. We can tell of many of the precious sons of Zion with whom we have taken sweet counsel. Blessed be the Lord—the righteous have not all failed from among men. Some of you can remember golden names that were very dear to you in the days of your youth—of men and women with whom you used to go up to God's House and take sweet counsel. Ah, what words used to drop from their lips and what sweet balm you had in the days of your

sorrow when they comforted and consoled you. And you have friends still left to whom you look up with some degree of reverence, while they look upon you with intense affection. There are some men that are comforters to your soul and when you talk to them you feel that their heart answers to your heart and that you can enjoy union and communion with them.

But Beloved, the good wine is kept till the last. All the fellowship with the saints that we have had here is as nothing compared with what we are to enjoy in the world to come. How sweet it is for us to recollect that in Heaven we shall be in the company of the best men, the noblest men, the most mighty men, the most honorable and the most renowned. We shall sit with Moses and talk with him of all his life of wonders. We shall walk with Joseph and we shall hear from him of the Grace that kept him in his hour of Peril. I doubt not you and I shall have the privilege of sitting by the side of David and hearing him recount the perils and the deliverances through which he passed. The saints of Heaven make but one communion. They are not divided into separate classes. We shall be allowed to walk through all the glorious ranks and hold fellowship with all of them. Nor need we doubt but that we shall be able to know them all. There are many reasons which I could not now enumerate, for it would occupy too much time, that seem to my mind to settle the point that in Heaven we shall know even as we are known and shall perfectly know each other and that, indeed, makes us long to be there. "The general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven."

Oh, to get away from this poor Church here, that is full of strifes and divisions and bickering and jealousies and animosities—to get away from the society of men that are full of infirmities, although they have much Grace and to get into a place where there shall be no infirmities in those with whom we talk—no hasty tempers—where we cannot possibly strike a chord that would make a jarring note—when it shall not be in our power to raise among those holy birds of Paradise a cause of strife—when we shall walk in the midst of them all and see love beaming from every eye and feel that deep affection is seated in every heart. Oh, that will be the best wine! Are you not longing to drink of it?—to enter into that great Church fellowship and attend those glorious Church meetings?—

"Where all the chosen race Shall meet around the Throne, To bless the conduct of His Grace, And make His wonders known." Again—look at Heaven, if you will, in the point of knowledge. We know very much on earth that makes us happy. Jesus Christ has taught us many things that give us joy and gladness. It is a world of ignorance, but still through Grace we have entered into the school of the Gospel and we have learned some sweet truths. It is true we are very much like the boy who is beginning to write. We had to make many ugly pothooks and hangers and we have not yet learned to write the sweet running hand of joy. But nevertheless, the Lord has taught us some great truths to fill our heart with joy—the great doctrine of election, the knowledge of our redemption, the fact of our security in Christ. These great but simple doctrines have filled our hearts with bliss. But, Brethren, the best wine is kept till the last, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall take the book and break the seals thereof and permit us to read it all. Then shall we rejoice indeed, for the best wine will be at our lips. There are old cases of knowledge that contain the richest wine and Christ shall stave them in and we shall drink of them to the full. It is not fit that we should know all things now—we could not bear many things and therefore Christ keeps them back. But—

"There shall you see and hear and know All you desired or wished below, And every power find sweet employ In that eternal world of joy."

You may, if you please, look at Heaven in another sense—as a place of manifestations and of joys. Now this world is a place of manifestations to the Believer. Shall I venture for a moment, or even for a second, to talk of manifestations of Himself which Christ is pleased to afford to His poor children on earth? No, Beloved, your own experience shall supply my lack. I will only say that there are times when the Lord Jesus said unto His Beloved, "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards. Let us see if the vines flourish, whether the tender grape appears and the pomegranates bud forth— there will I give you My loaves." But what must be the fellowship of Heaven? I fail tonight in attempting to talk to you of the best wine for this simple reason—I believe there are very few men that can preach of Heaven so as to interest you much, for you feel that all we can say is so far behind the reality, that we might as well have let it alone.

Baxter might write a Saint's Rest, but I am no Baxter—would God I were! The day may come perhaps when I may talk more copiously of these blessings. But at present, in my own soul, when I begin to talk of the communion of Heaven, I seem overcome, I cannot imagine it. For the next thought that always succeeds my first attempt to think of it, is a thought of overwhelming gratitude, coupled with a kind of fear that this is too good for such an unworthy worm as I. It was a privilege for John to put his head on the Master's bosom, but that is nothing compared with the privilege of lying in His embrace forever. Oh, we must wait until we get there and as one of old said, "In five minutes you shall know more of Heaven than I could tell you in all my life." It needs but that we should see our Lord, that we should fly into His arms, that we should feel His embrace, that we should fall at His feet and, was I about to say, weep for joy? No, that were impossible, but lie there, as it were dissolved away in ecstasy— to feel that we at least have arrived in that dear place which He has spoken to us of when He said—"Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Truly He has kept the best wine until the last.

II. And now, WHAT IS OUR LORD'S REASON FOR DOING THIS? That was the second point. Very briefly. The Lord might have given us the best wine last, but He will not act as the devil does. He will always make a broad distinction between His dealings and the dealings of Satan.

Again—He will not give us the best wine first, because that is not His good pleasure. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is the only reason why you will get it at all. And the reason why you do not receive it now is because it is not your Father's good pleasure that you should have it just yet. Again. Your Father does not give you the good wine now, because He is giving you an appetite for it. At the old feasts of the Romans men used to drink bitter things and all kinds of singular and noxious mixtures, to make them thirsty. Now, in this world, God is, as it were, making His children thirsty, that they may take deeper draughts of Heaven. I cannot think that Heaven would be so sweet to me if I had not first to dwell on earth. Who knows best the sweet of rest? Is it not the laborer? Who understands best the joy of peace? Is it not the man who has dwelt in the land of war? Who knows most the sweetness of joy? Is it not the man who has passed through a world of sorrow? You are having your appetites sharpened by these trials. You are being made ready to receive the fullness of joy that is at the presence of God

forever.

Again—the Lord has this also in view. He is making you fit for the best wine, that He may be glorified by the trial of your faith. If it were in my power to go to Heaven tonight and I could enter there, yet if I should have a suspicion that there was more to do or more to suffer here, I would infinitely prefer to wait my Father's time, because, methinks, in Heaven we shall bless God for all we have suffered. When it is all over, how sweet it will be to talk of it! When you and I shall meet each other in the streets of Heaven—and there are some of you that have had but few trials, but few doubts and fears and tribulations and conflicts—you will talk of how God delivered you. But you will not be able to talk as some of the tried saints will. Ah, what sweet stories some of them will tell! I should like to go by the side of Jonah and hear how he went down to the bottom of the mountains and how he thought the earth with her bars was about him forever.

And Jeremiah—I often think what a deal we shall get out of Jeremiah in eternity—what he will have to tell, who took such plunges into the sea of sorrow! And David, too, the sweet Psalmist, so full of experience he will never have done talking of what the Lord has done for him! And I think you and I, when we get to Heaven, will have enough to think of. As a poor woman once said, when she was in great doubt and fear whether she should be saved at all—she said in her prayer, "Lord, if You will save me, only one thing I can promise You. If You will take me to Heaven You shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise You while immortality lasts and I will tell the angels that You saved ME." And this is the constant burden of Heaven. They are each one amazed that he is there. Beloved, if we did not have to pass through these trials and troubles and these soul conflicts and such like we should have very little to talk about in Heaven. I have no doubt that the babes in paradise are as happy as the rest, but I do not wish to be a babe in paradise. I bless God I did not go to Heaven when an infant—I shall have the more to praise God for, when I shall look back through a life of mercies, a life of trials and yet a life of sustaining Grace— there will be a louder song, because the deeper have been our troubles. These, I think, are some of God's reasons.

III. And now, dear Brothers and Sisters, what shall I say about the LESSON WE ARE TO LEARN FROM THIS FACT of Christ keeping the best wine until now? Going home the other night I noticed the difference between the horse's pace in coming here and going home and I thought to myself, "Ah, the horse goes well, because he is going home." And the thought struck me, "How well a Christian ought to go, because he is going home." You know, if we were going from home, every rough stone in the road might check us and we might need a good deal of whip to make us go. But it is going home. Bless God, every step we take is going home. It may be knee-deep in trouble, but it is all on the road. We may be ankledeep in fear, but it is going home. I may stumble, but I always stumble homewards. All my afflictions and griefs, when they cast me down, but cast me onwards towards Heaven. The mariner does not mind the waves, if every wave sends him nearer his haven and he does not care how loudly the winds howl, if they only blow him nearer port. That is the Christian's happy lot—he is going homeward. Let that cheer you, Christian, and make you travel on joyfully, not needing the whip to urge you to duty, but always going on with alacrity through duty and through trial, because you are going homeward.

Again—if we have the best things to come, dear Friends, do not let us be discontented. Let us put up with a few of the bad things now, for they only seem to be so. A traveler who is on a journey in a hurry, if he has to stay for a night at an inn, he may grumble a little at the want of

accommodation, but he does not say very much, because he is off tomorrow—he is only stopping a short time at the inn. He says, "I shall get home tomorrow night," and then he thinks of the joys of home and does not care about the discomforts of his hard journey. You and I are travelers. It will soon be over. We may have had but a very few shillings a week compared with our neighbor, but we shall be equal with him when we get there. He may have had a large house, with a great many rooms, while we had, it may be, only one upper room. Ah, we shall have as large a mansion as he in Paradise.

We shall soon be at the journey's end and then the road will not matter. Come! Let us put up with these few inconveniences on the road, for the best wine is coming. Let us pour away all the vinegar of murmuring, for the best wine shall come. Once more, if the Christian has the best wine to come, why should he envy the worldling? David did—he was discontented when he saw the prosperity of the wicked and you and I are often tempted to do it. But you know what we ought to say when we see the wicked prosper, when we see them happy and full of delights of sinful pleasure? We ought to say, "Ah, my good wine is to come, I can bear that you should have your turn—my turn will come afterwards. I can be put off with these things and lie with Lazarus at the gate, while the dogs lick my sores. My turn is to come, when the angels shall carry me into Abraham's bosom and your turn is to come too, when in Hell you lift up your eyes, being in torments.

Christian, what more shall I say to you? Though there are a thousand lessons to learn from this, that the best wine is kept to the last—"Take heed to yourself, that you also keep your good wine until the last. The further you go on the road, seek to bring to your Savior the more acceptable sacrifice. You had little faith years ago—Man, bring out the good wine now! Seek to have more faith. Your Master is better to you every day and you shall see Him to be the best of all masters and friends. Seek to be better to your Master every day. Be more generous to His cause, more active to labor for Him, more kind to His people, more diligent in prayer. And take heed that as you grow in years, you grow in Grace, so that when you come at last to the river Jordan and the Master shall give you the best wine, you may also give to Him the best wine and praise Him most loudly when the battle shall just be over and when the whirlwind is dying away into the everlasting peace of Paradise.

And now, dear Friends, I am conscious that I have totally failed in endeavoring to bring forth this good wine. But it is written that God has revealed it unto us by His Spirit, but that ear has not heard it. Now, if I had told it to you tonight and your ear would have heard it, then the text would not have been true. And as I have unwittingly proved the truth of this Scripture, I cannot be very sorry at having helped to witness the truth of my Master's word. Only this I say—the nearer you live to Christ the nearer you will be to Heaven—for if there is one place next door to Pisgah it is Calvary. It may seem strange but if you live much on Calvary you live very near Nebo. For although Moses may have seen Canaan from Nebo, I have never seen Heaven anywhere but close to Calvary.

When I have seen my Savior crucified, then I have seen Him glorified. When I have read my name written in His blood, then I have seen afterwards my mansion which He has prepared for me. When I have seen my sins washed away, then I have seen the white robe that I am to wear forever. Live near to the Savior, Brothers and Sisters, and you shall not be very far off Heaven. Remember, after all, it is not far to Heaven. It is only one gentle sigh and we are there. We talk of it

as a land very far off, but close it is and who knows but that the spirits of the just are here tonight? Heaven is close to us. We cannot tell where it is, but this we know, that it is not a far off land. It is so near, that, swifter than thought, we shall be there, emancipated from our care and woe and blessed forever.

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

John 3,3 #130 - Regeneration

REGENERATION

NO. 130

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 3, 1857,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Unless one is born-again, he cannot 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, yes, 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, to frequently 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 "Unless we are born-again we cannot see the Kingdom of God." Then I will 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 cannot 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! Nor could they enjoy any 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—an American 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 cannot be altered—that a man must be a born subject—or else he cannot 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," he says. "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, 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 Muslim nor Jew. You think that the name, Christian, is a creditable one to you and you have taken it. Be you 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 use whatever unless there is something more added to it—the being born-again as a subject of Jesus Christ!

"But," says this American 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 anything 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 take off this plume, I will not shake this tomahawk, I renounce these garments. The moccasin I cast away forever. 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 requires that he must be born in this country. And without that, whatever his dress might be, he could not enter the palace. How many are there of you who 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 use whatever for admitting you into the Kingdom of Heaven—unless this is also complied with—the being born-again! Oh, dress yourselves ever so grandly with the clothes 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. You are not a Christian, remember, unless you are born-again! "That which is of the flesh is flesh," and you, not having the operations of the Spirit in you, still have Heaven's gates shut against you because you are not born-again!

"Well," says this Indian, "I will not only adopt the dress but I will learn the language. I will put away, far away from my lips, my brogue and my language that I once spoke in the wild prairie or in the woods. 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 in just 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 became thoroughly Anglicized. May I not then be received?" "No," says the keeper of the door, "there is no admittance, for unless a man is born in this country, he cannot 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! You have studied biographies and sometimes you tell long tales 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 even adopted a Puritanical twang, perhaps! You go through the world just like professors do. 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 around. You are all that a Christian can be—except that you are without a Christian heart—you are whitewashed sepulchers, still full of rottenness within, though fairly garnished 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—he must 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, "Unless a man is born-again, he cannot 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 ever so much, but the footman would say, "Sir, do not abuse me, I cannot 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—"Unless a man is born-again." I cannot 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 are 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 20 years afterwards! The champion of the prize ring is a regenerated man. Oh, yes, he was regenerated, because in infancy he was baptized and, therefore, if all infants in Baptism are regenerated, the prize fighter is a regenerate 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 everybody and beating his wife, worse than a brute? Well,

he is regenerate, he is one of those Puseyite regenerates—oh, goodly regenerate! Do you see 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! He is one of those Puseyite regenerates! Yes, he is regenerate because he was baptized in infancy! Regenerate while he mixes his strychnine! Regenerate while he slowly administers his poison— that he may cause death and infinite pain all the while he is causing it! Regenerate, indeed! If that is regeneration, such regeneration is not worth having—if that is the thing that makes us part of the Kingdom of Heaven, verily, the Gospel is, indeed, a licentious Gospel! We can say nothing about it. If that is 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 ignore that Gospel, because it is so inconsistent with the most common 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 cannot 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 you are 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 inconsistent with the sound judgment of a man cannot 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 and forsake many lusts in which he indulged and conquer evil habits. But no man in the world can make himself to be born of God! Though he should struggle ever so much, he could never accomplish what is beyond his power. And, mark you, if he could make himself to be born-again, he would still not enter Heaven because there is another point in the condition which he would have violated—"unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot 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 then 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, "works 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 Divine Power whereby the dead sinner is quickened, the unwilling sinner is made willing and 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! Maybe this is called fanatical Doctrine—that we cannot help—it is a Scriptural Doctrine—that is enough for us! "Unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot 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. 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 Unless a man is born-again, he cannot 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. It sets us on 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 is 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 privileges and liberty 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 Spirit 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. "Unless a man is born-again," he cannot know about heavenly things on earth and he cannot enjoy heavenly blessings forever—"he cannot 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 IS BORN-AGAIN, HE CANNOT 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, maybe, 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 cannot 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 could 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 go, let me go! Let me out of this miserable place!" I appeal to yourselves. Very often a sermon is too long for you. 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 and night? If just a short discourse, here, is very wearying, what will you think of the eternal talking 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 nothing 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 and women, 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 anything 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 is 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 cannot hear singing. Do I, when I say it, say a cruel thing? It is their disability that prevents them. So when God says you cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven, He means it is your disability of not being born-again that prevents you ever entering there.

But there are some other reasons. There are reasons why—

"Those holy gates forever bar Pollution, sin and shame."

There are reasons, besides those in yourself, why you cannot see the Kingdom of God unless you are born-again. Ask yon spirits before the Throne of God—"Angels, principalities and powers, would you be willing that men who do not love 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 sinblack 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 you willing that the wicked should enter Heaven as they are, without being born-again? You love men. Say, are you 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 by the conversation of Sodomites again, as once I was?" I see Abraham. And he comes forward and he says, "No. I cannot have them here. I had enough of them while I was with them on earth—their jests and jeers, their silly talk, their vain conversation vexed and grieved us. We don't want them here." And, heavenly though they are, 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 anyone 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—"Unless a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." What? Sinner! Will you scale the battlements of Paradise when God is ready to thrust you down to Hell? Will you, with impudent face, brazen Him out? God has said it! God has said it with a voice of thunder, "You shall not see the Kingdom of Heaven!" Can you wrestle with the Almighty? Can you overthrow Omnipotence? Can you grapple with the Most High? Worm of the dust! Can you overcome your Maker? Trembling insect of an hour, shaken by the lightning when far overhead they flash far across the sky, will you dare the hand of God? Will you venture to defy Him to His face? Ah, He would laugh at you! As the snow melts before the sun, as wax runs at the fierceness of the fire—so would you—if His fury should once lay hold of you! Think not that you can overcome Him. He has sealed the gates of Paradise against you 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 tear them in pieces and there shall be none to deliver." Now, Sinner, can you brazen it out against Him? Will you rush upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's shields? Will you try to scale His Heaven when His arrow is stringed upon the bow to reach your heart? What? When the glittering sword is at your neck and ready to slay you, will you endeavor to strive against your Maker? No, Potsherd, no! Contend with your fellow potsherd! Go, crawling Grasshopper. Go, fight with your brothers! Strive with them, but come not against the Almighty! He has 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 believe it, rail not at me, for it is God's message and I speak it in love to your soul, lest, lacking it, you should perish in the dark and walk blindfolded to your everlasting punishment!

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." Oh, Sir, believe me, you will be a miserable fool for your pains! When men die their state is fixed—

"Fixed is 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 impression never can be changed. Today you are like the burning metal running forth from the cauldron into the mold. Death cools you in your mold and you are cast in that shape throughout eternity! The voice of doom cries 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 cannot be bornagain! 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 cannot be regenerated because they are dead!

"Well," says another, "I will take care that I am regenerated just before I die." Sir, I repeat again, you are a fool in talking thus! How do you know that you shall live? Have you taken a lease of your life, as you have of your house? Can you ensure the breath within your nostrils? Can you say in certainty that another ray of light shall ever reach your eyes? Can you be sure that as your heart is beating a funeral march to the grave, you will not soon beat the last note and so you shall die where you stand or now sit? Oh, Man, if your bones were iron and your sinews brass and your lungs steel, then you might say, "I shall live." But you are made of dust! You are like the flower of the field—you may die right now! Lo! I see Death standing yonder, moving to and fro! The stone of time upon his scythe, to sharpen it. Today, today, 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 cannot live. God carries us away as a flood, like a ship in a whirlpool—like a log in a current dashed onward to the waterfall. There is no stopping any one of us—we are all dying! And yet you say you will be regenerated before you die? Yes, Sirs, but are you regenerated now? For if not, it may be too late to hope for tomorrow! Tomorrow you may be in Hell, sealed up forever by adamantine 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 you do not understand it! You smile at it now, but there will be a day when your conscience will be tender, when your memory will be strong, when your judgment will be enlightened and when you will think very differently from what you do now. Sinners in Hell are not the fools they were on earth! In Hell they do not laugh at everlasting fires. In the pit of Hell they do not despise the words, "eternal fire." The worm that never dies, when it is gnawing, gnaws out all jokes and laughter. You may despise God, now, and despise me, now, for what I say, but death will change your tune! Oh my Hearers, if that were all, I would be willing. You may despise me, yes, you may. But oh, I beseech you, do not despise yourselves! Oh be not so foolhardy 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, today, as you would have gone to the opera or playhouse. You thought I would 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 you perish, my hands are washed in innocence. I have told you of your doom. I again cry—REPENT, REPENT, REPENT—for, "unless you repent you shall all likewise perish." I came here determined this morning if I must use rough words to use them—to speak right out 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 you are! Do you see that fire? We are startled up from our beds, the light is at the window. We rush downstairs. People are hurrying to and fro. The street is trampled thick with crowds—they are rushing towards 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! Hark! There is a man upstairs—there is a man in the top room! There is just time for him to escape, but barely. A shout is raised—"Aho! Fire! Fire! Fire! Aho!"—but the man does not make his appearance at the window. Look, the ladder is placed against the walls. It is up to the window sill—a strong hand dashes in the easement! Where is the man? 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 cannot 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 fire! Oh, when you are saved, it will then be time 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, absolute predestination. All these questions are good and well enough afterwards, for those who 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 awaits me?"

But ah, my Friends, I cannot 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, 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," asks a voice, "did you warn them? Did you 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 more 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 hands in death and said, "Farewell, until we meet again." 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 of God—but you will never see your children again 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 blessed, 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."

Oh, 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. May it, by the Grace of God, never be so. Amen and Amen.

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 87

John 2,11 #2155 - The Beginning of Miracles Which

THE BEGINNING OF MIRACLES

WHICH JESUS DID

NO. 2155

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1890,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested

forth His Glory; and His disciples believed on Him."

John 2:11.

AT this time I shall not consider the relation of this miracle to total abstinence. The wine which Jesus made was good wine and it was made of water—we are not likely to meet with anything of the kind in this country where the wine is seldom made from the pure juice of the grape—and where it is not known who made it, or of what it is made. What is now called wine is a very different liquid from that which our Lord Divinely produced. We use our Christian liberty to abstain from wine and we judge that our Savior would approve of our avoiding that which, in these days, makes our brother to offend. We who quit the intoxicating cup of today have our ways of viewing our Master's action in this instance and we do not find it difficult to see wisdom and holiness in it. But even if we could not so interpret what He did, we should not dare to question Him. Where others quibble, we adore.

Even this is more than I meant to have said, for my object, this morning, is far removed from this controversy. I pursue a spiritual theme and pray for help from on high to treat it aright. We find this miracle only in John. Neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke has a word of it. How did John come to know of it? In part it was because of his being present. But the preface in reference to the mother of Jesus came to him in another way, we think. Remember our Lord's words to John from the Cross and how it is written, "From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home"? I believe that no one heard the words of Jesus to His mother but Mary herself. It was after the manner of His delicacy to utter a reproof to her when she was alone.

But when John and the honored mother conversed together, she, in all probability, reminded him of the miracle and told him of her mistake. Saints gain precious things from God's poor and tried servants—and those who entertain the widow and the fatherless shall not go without reward. If my conjecture is correct, I see the holy modesty of "the mother of Jesus"—that she narrated her own fault and did not forbid John to mention it. The Holy Spirit moved the Evangelist to chronicle not only the miracle, but the error of Mary. It was wise, for it is a conclusive argument against the

notion that the mother of Jesus can intercede for us with her Son and use authority with Him. It is evident from this narrative that our Lord would tolerate no such idea, either in her mind or in ours.

"Woman, what have I to do with you?" is a sentence which rings the death knell of any idea of our Lord's being moved by relationships according to the flesh. With all loving respect He yet very decidedly shuts out all interference from Mary—for His kingdom was to be according to the spirit and not after the flesh. I delight in believing, concerning the mother of Jesus, that though she fell into a natural mistake, yet she did not for an instant persist in it. Neither did she hide it from John, but probably took care to tell it to him that no others should ever fall into similar error by thinking of her in an unfitting manner.

Let it never be forgotten that "the mother of Jesus" had a very firm and practical faith in her Son, concerning whom angels and Prophets had borne witness to her. She had seen Him in His infancy and watched Him as a Child—and it could not have been easy to believe in the Divinity of One whom you have held as an Infant to be nourished at your breast. From His marvelous birth she believed in Him and now that she receives a kind of rebuff from Him, her faith does not fail her, but she calmly turns to the servants and bids them stand ready to obey His commands, whatever they might be. She felt that He was quite certain to do the kind and necessary thing. Even from His words, "My hour is not yet come," she probably gathered that His hour to work would arrive.

Her faith was accompanied with imperfection, but yet it was of the right kind. It persevered under difficulty and in the end it was triumphant, for the wine which had failed became plentiful again and that which He provided was of surpassing quality. May we have a faith which will outlive a rebuke! May we, like Mary, sing, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" and may Jesus be to us, as He was to her—a trusted and beloved One upon whom our soul has learned to wait with confidence.

With that end in view I have taken this subject for discourse. Oh, that His disciples may trust Him more and more! John said, in another place, concerning the doings of our Lord, "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name." Truly, I can say this sermon is preached that my beloved hearers may believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved! We shall consider three things in connection with the text. First, the significance of this beginning of miracles. Read "signs" instead of "miracles" and you will be nearer the meaning of the original. This "beginning of miracles" was intended, like all that followed it, to be an instructive sign.

Secondly, let us observe its specialty as a manifestation— "And manifested forth His glory." And then, thirdly, its sufficiency as a confirmation of faith— "And His disciples believed on Him." It was calculated to establish their faith and it did so.

I. To begin with, let us think upon THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS BEGINNING OF SIGNS. May the Holy Spirit graciously assist our thoughts and warm our hearts! The first sign-wonder that Christ worked was the turning of water into wine at the wedding at Cana of Galilee and as we may often judge of a man's course by its beginning—and the beginning is often the key of all that follows—so we may learn the whole tenor of our Lord's miracles from this one. Note, first, that this miracle displayed His self-denial. Our Lord had been a few days before in the wilderness and after 40 days' fasting He was hungry. It was in His power to have commanded the stones to become bread—and had He done so the beginning of signs would have been a miracle worked for His own

necessities.

But such a beginning would not have been like His life-course and especially would it have been wide apart from the conclusion of His life when it was said of Him, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." He would not make bread for Himself, but He will make wine for others. And the fact that it was wine and not bread that he made, makes the miracle all the more remarkable. He did not merely make bread for men, which is a necessity, but He even went further and made wine for them, which is a luxury, though He would not make even bread for Himself. You see the sharp contrast between His refusal to help Himself, even to a crust of bread, and His readiness to give to men not only what might be necessary for life, but that which was only necessary for their joy.

When the wine failed, the only danger was that the bride and bridegroom would be pained and the wedding dishonored—and this our Lord prevents. He would not allow the humble festival of two villagers to come to an untimely end when they had so kindly invited Himself and His disciples. He repaid their courtesy by His spontaneous bounty. How greatly is our Divine Lord to be admired and beloved by us! Behold His kindness! He has no selfishness about Him. We can each one cry, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He laid down His life for men—He gave His all to others. No selfish aim ever tinctured that consecrated life of His! For Himself He reserved no measure or degree of power—for others He used that power without stint. This beginning of miracles is a display of unselfish working. Thoughtfulness for others shone in that miracle like the sun in the heavens.

Next, observe that this miracle was marked with beneficence. It was "the beginning of miracles" and the first is the keynote for the rest—happy are we that the first miracle is full of blessing! Moses commenced his work in Egypt with a miracle of judgment. He cast down a rod and it became a serpent—and he turned water into blood—but Jesus overcomes the serpent with the rod of Scripture and turns water into wine! He works no plagues but heals our sicknesses. Blessed Master—

"Your hand no thunder bears, No terror clothes Your brow, No bolts to drive our guilty souls To fiercer flames below."

The mission of Jesus is a happy one and so it opens at a marriage feast. It is intended to bring joy and gladness to heavy hearts and so it begins with a deed of royal bounty. At the coronation of kings the conduit in Cheapside has run with wine and here the water pots are filled with it to the brim!

The after-miracles were all beneficent. True, He withered a fruitless fig tree, but it was a beneficent act to wither a tree which drew men out of their way by false promises of fruit and so caused bitter pangs of disappointment to hungry and fainting wayfarers. It was a good thing to teach us all a practical lesson of sincerity at so small an expense as the withering of a good-for-nothing tree. All our Lord's actions towards men are full of royal benevolence and Grace. There will be a day when the Lamb will be angry and, as a Judge, He will condemn the ungodly—but while this dispensation lasts, He is to us all mercy, love, kindness and bounty. If you, my Hearer, will come to Him, you will find that His heart will go out to you and He will freely bless you with life, rest, peace and joy. The Lord will bless you and remove the curse far from you.

This beginning of miracles was worked at a wedding to show great beneficence. Marriage was the last relic of paradise left among men and Jesus hastened to honor it with His first miracle. Marriage is His Father's ordinance, for He it was that brought Eve to Adam—and our Lord worked in harmony with the Father. He symbolically touched the very springs of manhood and gave His sanction to that ordinance whereby the race is perpetuated. Jesus comes to a marriage and gives His blessing that we may know that our family life is under His care. How much we owe to the joys of our domestic relationships! Thereby life is raised from water into wine. We have sometimes thought it was almost a proof of the Divinity of Christianity that there could be homes so happy as some of our homes have been made by the Presence of our dear Lord whom we invited to our wedding feast—and who has never gone away—but has stayed with us all these happy years! It was a miracle which, by honoring marriage, confirmed an institution fraught with happiness to our race.

But, next, it was a miracle most compassionate. Our Lord's miracles were worked, in each case, to meet a need. The wine had failed at the wedding feast and our Lord had come in at the time of the pinch, when the bridegroom was fearful of being made ashamed. That need was a great blessing. If there had been sufficient wine for the feast, Jesus had not worked this miracle and they had never tasted this purest and best of wine! It is a blessed need which makes room for Jesus to come in with miracles of love. It is good to run short that we may be driven to the Lord by our necessity, for He will more than supply it.

My dear Hearer, if you have no need, Christ will not come to you. But if you are in dire necessity, His hands shall be stretched out to you. If your needs stand before you like huge empty water pots, or if your soul is as full of grief as those same pots were filled with water up to the brim, Jesus can, by His sweet will, turn all the water into wine—the sighing into singing! Be glad to be very weak, that the power of God may rest upon you! As for me, I am more and more dependent upon the Lord for every particle of strength. My deacons and elders know how often on a Sunday morning, before coming into the pulpit, I have thanked God that it is so. I am glad to be entirely dependent upon the Lord and to have such a failure as to all my natural wine of ability that there may be occasion for my Lord to come in and supply wine of strength, of another and more Divine quality.

We are likely to do our work best when we feel most our insufficiency and are driven to God for help. If we go blundering to our service, we shall fail. But if we go tremblingly as to ourselves, by confidently looking up to the Lord, we shall be more than conquerors! If we have a great need. If something essential has given out. If we are likely to be despised for failure—let us in faith expect the Lord Jesus to come for our deliverance! I gather from this miracle that our Lord looks to man's necessities and not to his possessions. He has an eye to our failures and needs—and He makes our distress the platform upon which He manifests His Glory by supplying all our needs.

Further, I cannot help noticing how condescending was this miracle! We are told, twice, that it was performed at Cana in Galilee. Twice is this mentioned so that we may observe it well. Our Lord did not choose the high places of Jerusalem, nor any of the notable cities of Palestine as the scene of His first miracle—He went to a quiet village in Galilee, Galilee of the Gentiles, a district much despised—and there He worked His first miracle at the city of rushes and canes, even Cana in Galilee. He worked the sign, not on a spiritual and sacred occasion, nor before ecclesiastics and

scientists. Some seem to fancy that all our Lord does must be done in churches or cathedrals. No, no! This miracle was in a private house and that not at a Prayer Meeting or a Bible reading, but at the marriage of a couple of poor peasants, names unknown.

See how Jesus condescends to the common places of life and sheds a blessing upon the secular side of our existence! Those who gave that feast were people of slender means. The wine would not have been so soon exhausted if they had been very rich. It is true that seven more came to the wedding than they had expected, but still, if they had been wealthy people they would have had more than enough to satisfy seven extra guests, for Easterns kept open house for almost everybody during the marriage week. They were by no means an aristocratic party, or a set of Israel's notables. Why did not our Lord begin His miracles before the king, or the governor, or at least in the presence of the high priest and the scribes and doctors of the Law? Our Lord chose not to make His first appeal to the great and dignified.

I feel much comfort in this fact—that He comes to commonplace individuals is bliss to me! You and I may, in station and in wealth, be low down in the scale, but Jesus stoops to men of mean estate. To common spots like this Newington, on the south side of the Thames, the Lord has come to visit His people! Here, also, has He worked His transformations and many a watery life has been made rich and full through His Grace! My dear Hearer, Jesus can come to you, though you are only a laborer or a servant, or a poor tradesman, or the wife of an artisan! Our Lord loves the poor! He is a great frequenter of cottages. He stops not for grand occasions, but He makes His abode with the lowly. He is full of condescension. This first of miracles was most munificent. He did not, at the wedding, multiply the bread—He dealt with a luxury and rejoiced their hearts with that which was as the pure blood of the grape. When our Lord fed the multitudes in the wilderness, He might have given them each a bit of bread to keep them from famishing. But He never does things in a beggarly, workhouse style and therefore He added fish to be a relish with their bread. Our Lord not only gives existence, but happy existence which is truly life. He does not give to men just enough for their necessity, but He gives up to the higher degree which we call enjoyment. Here He turns good wholesome water into a sweeter, richer, more nourishing beverage— perhaps we little know how truly good and sustaining that God-made drink was to those who were privileged to taste it.

Our dear Master will give to all those who are His followers a joy unspeakable and full of glory. They shall not only have enough Grace to live by so as barely to hope and serve, but they shall drink of "wines on the lees well-refined" and shall have Grace to sing with, Grace to rejoice with, Grace to fill them with assurance and cause them to overflow with delight. Our Beloved has not only brought us to the house of bread, but to the banquet of wine! We have Heaven here below. Jesus does not measure out Grace by the drop, as chemists do their medicines—He gives liberally—His vessels are filled to the brim. And the quality is as notable as the quantity—He gives the best of the best—joys, raptures and ecstasies.

O my Soul, at what a royal table do you sit! He daily loads you with benefits. What a gracious miracle it was! How free! How unconstrained! He did not need pressing to do it. Mary must not interfere. Stand back, good woman, for the Lord knows what need there is without your telling Him! Dear Friend, you think, perhaps, that you must pray up to a certain quantity, but the Lord is much more ready to give than you are to pray. It is not your prayer that will make Him willing to bless you, for He is willing, even now, to do for you exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even

think! To obtain the supply of wine it is noteworthy that nothing was required from men but what was very simple and easy. Hasten, you obedient servants, to fetch water—just draw it from the well and pour it into those large water pots—that is all you have to do!

The Lord Jesus does not come to us with hard conditions and exacting terms. Dream not that to be saved you have to do or feel some great thing. As you are you may believe in Jesus to eternal life! Have faith enough to draw out at the Lord's bidding and, to your own amazement, there will be wine where before there was only water! The Lord, by His Spirit, can come and change your heart and renew your spirit so that where only a little natural thought has been, there will be spiritual life and feeling! He will do this without pressing and persuading. Grace is free! Jesus has a tender heart towards needy sinners—the spear has laid it open—a prayer will touch it.

The first miracle was prophetic. At a wedding our Lord begins His signs. To a marriage feast He invites us now. At a glorious marriage supper all will end. The story of our Bible ends like all well-told tales, with—they were married and lived happy ever afterwards—for proof read the Book of the Revelation. Our Lord will come to celebrate a wedding between Himself and His Church and all the wine they will drink at that high festival will be of His own providing and all the joy and bliss will be of His own giving! He is the sun of Heaven's day! He is the glory of the glorified! He will take care that throughout the millennial age, yes, and throughout eternity, the joy of His chosen shall never fail but they shall joy in God and in Himself without measure and without bound.

Our Lord began with this special miracle as if to show us that He had come here to transform and transfigure all things—to fulfill the Law and its types—putting into it substance and reality. He began with this special miracle to take man and lift him up from a fallen creature into a Heavenborn son and heir! Jesus has come to rid this planet of her mists and to array it in garments of glory and beauty. Soon shall we see new heavens and a new earth! The new Jerusalem will come down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband! Jesus has come to elevate and to fulfill—and He gives the token of this in this beginning of signs.

II. Secondly, I want you to notice in this miracle ITS SPECIALTY AS A MANIFESTATION. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory." I believe that there is a very clear connection between the first chapter of this Gospel and the passage before us. John, in the first chapter, said, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His Glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth." Here you have an unveiling of that Grace and Glory. Observe that He manifested forth His Glory. Truly, He glorified the Father, for that was His great end and aim, but yet He manifested forth His own Glory in that very act.

Notice that it was His own Glory which was manifested. This was never said of any Prophet or saint. Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah—none of these ever manifested their own glory—indeed, they had no glory to manifest! Here is One greater than a Prophet! Here is One greater than the holiest of men! He manifested His own Glory—it could not be otherwise. I feel that I must adore my Lord Jesus while I read these words. Jesus revealed His own Glory as God and Man. During all those former years it had been veiled. He had been a Boy obedient at home, a young Man industrious as a carpenter at Nazareth—then His Glory was a spring shut up, a fountain sealed—but now it began to flow forth in the ruddy stream of this great miracle!

If you will think of it, you will see more clearly what Glory it was. He was a Man like other men and yet at will He turned water into wine! He was a Man with a mother—His mother was there as if to remind us that He was born of woman. He was a Man with a mother and yet He was so truly "God over all" that He created, by His will, an abundance of wine. He was but one among many wedding guests with His six humble followers, but yet He acted the Creator's part! He sat not arrayed in high priest's garments, nor did He wear the Pharisee's phylacteries, nor any other form of ornament betokening ecclesiastical office or profession—yet He did greater wonders than they could attempt. He was simply a Man among men and yet He was God among men! His wish was Law in the world of matter so that water received the qualities of wine. Adore Him, Brothers and Sisters! Adore Him reverently! Bow low before Him who was a Man, a real Man and yet worked as only Jehovah Himself can work! Worship Him who counts it not robbery to be equal with God and yet is found among the guests at a lowly marriage, manifesting His Glory even there!

Observe, He manifested His Glory by operating beyond the power of Nature. Nature does not in an instant turn water into wine—if this is done it must be by the direct hand of the Lord. It is true there are processes by which the dewdrop enters the berry of the grape and is gradually, by secret arrangements, turned into refreshing juice. But by what power could water be taken from an earthen vessel and be transmuted into wine while being carried to the table? None but God Himself could do this and as Jesus did it, He therein displayed His Godhead. By doing this He showed that He had all power on earth. He can do as He wills and by His one act of creation, or transformation, He makes manifest the glory of His power.

He did this by partly operating without any instrument. When Moses sweetened the bitter water it was by a tree which the Lord showed to him. When Elisha purged the springs he threw salt into the water. We have no instrumentality here. Whenever our Lord did use visible means He took care to select such as in themselves were evidently insufficient for the purpose, if not opposed to His design as, for instance, when He healed the blind man by making clay with spittle and putting it on his eyes—a thing to blind him, rather than to open his eyes. Here, however, our Lord had no instrument whatever. He did not even speak a word and say, "Water, blush into wine." No, He simply willed and it was done! How divinely does He manifest His Glory in this respect!

And He operated so easily and so majestically that He therein reminds us of the method and way of the great God. He simply says, "Fill the water pots," and the servants do His bidding with enthusiasm, for He is Master of all minds. "Draw out now," He says, and in the process of bearing it to the ruler of the feast the water is turned into wine! Here is no effort, no breathing as of one gathering up his strength to perform a feat. The earth revolves, but the wheel of Nature never grinds upon its axle. God acts by His Laws in a perfectly natural and unconstrained manner. Creation and Providence abide in that majestic silence which comes of Omnipotence. All goes easily where God is. With His own will He can do all things for us and in a moment turn the waters of our grief into joy.

Our Lord manifested His Glory by operating naturally and without display. I really believe that if you could have worked this wonder you would have said to the ruler of the feast, "Call upon all the guests to remark that the wine has failed and I am about to create a new supply. See this huge water pot? Mark how I have it filled with water that you may know that there is no wine in it. Observe me while I work the transformation." Then you would have spoken aloud, or you would

have gone through a series of performances. Jesus did nothing of the kind! He hates display. He will not have His kingdom come with observation. He shuns pomp, noise and ceremony. He but acts like a God whose wonders are too many to be made matters of note to Himself. It was God-like on our Lord's part to perform so great a work without appearing to be doing anything uncommon.

That He did literally perform the miracle was certified by impartial witnesses. John, or Philip, or the whole six might have said, "Master, we will fill the water pots with water." But this must not be so, lest there should be a suspicion of collusion between the Master and the disciples. The ordinary servants must fill the water pots with water. Again, the disciples would have been very pleased to bear the wine to the ruler of the feast, saying, "Here is the wine which our great and good Master has made for you." No, the servants shall bring in the wine and say nothing at all about from where it came—and the chief witness that what they bring is really wine, and wine of the best quality, shall be the master of the ceremonies— a gentleman not at all spiritually-minded, but one who has been at many such feasts and knows the custom of them and has a proverb ready to set it forth.

He was evidently a man who was a judge of the quality of wine and we may safely accept his verdict—"You have kept the best wine until now." The less spiritual the man in this case, the better the witness to the reality of the miracle! If he had been a follower of Jesus he might have been suspected of being in the swim with Him and His disciples. But you can see he is a man of another mold altogether. God's work is fact, not fiction—it appeals to faith, not to imagination. God does His transforming work in such a way that He will have witnesses ready to attest it. As when Christ rose from the dead there were appointed witnesses to certify it—so His first miracle is certified beyond all question as real and true by the best of witnesses.

There was a special reason for this. Oh, my beloved Hearers, if you come to Christ He will not deceive you! His blessings are not dreams! If you will come and trust in Jesus, the work He will do for you will be as real as what He did at Cana! Even the ungodly shall be obliged to see that God has made a change in you. When they see your new life, they will say, "Here is something good, the likes of which we never saw in him before." Come, I pray you, and take Christ to be your All in All and He will be, in very truth, all that you need! Trust Him with your sins and He will bring real pardon. Trust Him with your troubles—He will give you perfect rest! Trust Him with your evil nature—He will renew you! He is no pretender to deeds which He does not perform. He did by the witness of everybody at the marriage actually turn water into wine of special quality—and so He can now transform your character and make it such as Nature, when best educated, can never produce!

I say again, the specialty of this manifestation lies in the fact that it revealed the Lord Jesus, by His own Almighty power, uplifting everything He touched, transforming men, things and facts into nobler ones than they were before, or could ever have become. This is the specialty of the manifestation of Christ—He says, "Behold, I make all things new." He brings forth the best last! He raises the poor from hunger to feasting! He lifts up fallen humanity into something so glorious that it stands, in His Person, near to the Throne of God! In all this Christ is revealed and His name is glorified!

III. And now, lastly, I think we have here A REASON FOR THE CONFIRMING OF FAITH. It is said, "And His disciples believed on Him." Brothers and Sisters, notice something here. How did

John know that the disciples believed on Him? Why, because he was one of them and he himself believed on Him. The best witness is that of one who has a share in the fact. When you feel a thing yourself, you have a full assurance of it. John knew that the other five disciples believed on Jesus by what they said to him, for their feelings coincided with his own. Let us see to it that we, also, share in the faith which the marvels of our Lord are designed to produce.

Note that the guests at that feast all partook of the wine but the disciples at that feast had something far better—they had an increase of faith. An increase of faith is better, far, than all the dainties of a feast. Others ate and drank but these men saw God in Christ Jesus manifesting His Glory! Our enquiry is, What was there in this miracle which would tend to confirm their faith? Notice that I say to confirm their faith. It did not originate their faith, but it established it. Their faith had been originated by the Word of the Lord preached by John the Baptist—they had believed in Jesus as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

Secondly, they had enjoyed personal communion with Jesus, by going to Him and dwelling with Him. This had greatly strengthened their faith. And now they begin to taste of the benefit of being associated with Jesus and to see for themselves what Jesus was able to do. Thus their faith grew. His disciples believed on Him already, but this miracle confirmed their confidence. The miracle abundantly justified the disciples in implicitly believing in Jesus for it is manifest that one miracle proves the power to work every miracle. If Christ can turn water into wine by His will, He can do anything and everything. If Jesus has once exercised a power beyond Nature, we may readily believe that He can do it again—there is no limit to His power—He is God and with God all things are possible. Thus, the first miracle rightly confirmed their faith.

But, next, it showed their Master's readiness to meet unexpected difficulties. Nobody had foreseen that the wine would fail. Jesus had not gone to the marriage, prepared and primed, as we say among men. The demand came all of a sudden and the supply came, too. The wine ran out and He was ready for the difficulty. Does not this confirm your faith? Christ is always ready for every emergency! Something may happen tomorrow that you have not thought of—Christ will be ready for the unexpected. Between here and Heaven you will meet with a great many unlikely events, but they will not be surprises to Him. He has clear foresight—when the trial comes He will provide—"In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." Again, their faith was confirmed because He had showed that He could allow nothing to fail with which He was connected. I like to feel sure that Jesus is with me in any business, for then I know that the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hands. True, it was not the wedding of one of His relatives or disciples, but still it was a marriage at which He was a guest and He would not suffer it to be said that they ran short of provisions when He was there. His connection with the feast may seem to have been remote, but it was a connection—and slight connections are observed by our Lord Jesus! O my Soul, if I can but touch the hem of His garment, virtue will come from Him to me! I get into the same boat with Jesus and if I drown Jesus must drown, too, and therefore I know that I am safe! O my Heart, if I do but get the hand of Christ in my hand, or my hand in His hand, I am linked with Him and none can separate us! In that union is my life, my safety, my success—for nothing that He touches, or that touches Him, will ever fail.

He is only one of a party at a wedding, but because He is there things must go well. I think this must have encouraged the disciples much when, in later days, they began to preach. Their

confidence would be that Jesus was with them and they must prevail. They were poor, unlearned men and all the scholarship of the age was arrayed against them—but they said to themselves, "We fear not, for Jesus is in this controversy and He will see it through." Let us get Christ into our quarrel for God's Covenant and Truth and the battle is no longer doubtful! If, in the matter of your salvation, faith brings the Savior into the business, you may rest assured of eternal life!

It showed to them, next—and this must have greatly confirmed their faith—that He could use the poorest means. To make wine the Lord had only water and six large water pots. Yes, but He can make better wine out of water than men can make out of grapes! Behold His vats and His winepresses—six water pots of stone. You and I—what are we? Well, we are poor earthen vessels and a little cracked, I fear. There is little enough in us and what there is weak as water—but the Lord can bring forth from us a wine which will cheer the heart of God and man—words of faith which will please God and save man! The disciples would, in later days, know themselves to be nothing but earthen vessels and they would remember that their Lord could work miracles with them. When they saw the majestic ease of His working, do you not think it confirmed their faith? He did not call for angels. He did not deliver a long prayer, much less repeat a sacred incantation. He did but will it and the deed was done!

Next time they came into a difficulty, the disciples would believe that the Lord could easily enough appear for them. They would stand still and see the salvation of God! In some way or other the Lord would provide and He would do wonders without trouble to Himself. Brothers and Sisters, we shall come out at the big end of the horn, yet, for God is with us! It showed them, also, that from now on they need never be anxious. Will you that read your Greek Testament notice the expression here? Is it said, "His disciples believed Him"? No. Is it "Believed in him"? No. "Believed on him"? Yes. It is so in our version, but into would be more correct. The Greek is, "eis"—His disciples believed into Him. They so believed that they seemed to submerge themselves into Jesus!

"Into him"—think what that means! John, Andrew, Nathanael and the others cast their life-long concerns upon Jesus and felt that they need never have another care! Jesus would see them through to the end. They would leave everything to Him. Mary took the matter a little into her own hands, but she erred therein—the disciples entered into Jesus by the open door of this confirming miracle and there they rested. Be this your condition—"Casting all your care on Him, for He cares for you." They believed right into Jesus. It is one thing to believe in Him and another thing to believe Him—it is a restful thing to believe on Him, but it is best of all to believe right into Him so that your very personality is swallowed up in Christ and you feel the bliss of living, loving, lasting union with Him!

Those six men could not have produced a drop of wine for the wedding—but count their Master in with them and the seven could flood the streets with it if there had been need! Entering into partnership with Jesus, their faith rose as a morning without clouds. Now were they sure, steadfast, strong—for their weak and watery faith had gained the fullness and richness of generous wine!

I have done when I have said to any here who are undecided—see, my dear Hearer, Jesus Christ will come and visit such as you are! He is willing to go to plain men's houses even when they have a feast going on. Ask Him to come to you just as you are. See how He is able to bless human joy!

You think, perhaps, that you will go to Jesus next time you are in sorrow, but I say to you, come to Him at once, while you are in joy. You that are getting on in business, you that rejoice over a new-born child, you that are lately married, you that have passed an examination with honors—come to Jesus in your joy—and ask Him to raise your happiness to a higher degree and quality and elevate it till it touches the joy of the Lord!

Jesus is able to raise you, beloved Friend, from what you now are into something better, fuller, grander, nobler, holier and more God-like! May He do it now! Believe in Him! Believe Him! Believe on Him! Believe into Him and it shall be done! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 1:35-51; John 3:1-11.

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John 3,5 #3053 - Jesus Christ's Idiom

JESUS CHRIST'S IDIOM

NO. 3053

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Jesus answered, Verily, verily."

John 3:5.

THIS expression, "Verily, verily," seems to me to have been the peculiar idiom of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has absolutely forbidden His people ever to take an oath. His command upon that matter is most explicit, "I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven; for it is God's Throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King: neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil." My text was Jesus Christ's strongest form of affirmation—when He wished to speak most emphatically, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Every prominent public speaker has his own peculiar idioms and very much of the man's character will be found in the idioms that he uses. And I may add that the attention which the man deserves may sometimes be gauged by his idioms, for as his style of speaking will reveal to you the man, you will discover how far you ought to lend him your ears. If, from his speech, you judge that he is flippant, or insincere, or that there is something sinister in his motives, or that he is aiming at the display of himself rather than at the proclamation of the truth, you may straightway say, "Then there is no particular reason why I should listen to him." But if, from the very idiomatic force of the words which he uses, you feel that the man is true, sincere and earnest, then you say, "I shall be wise to give heed to his words and to let his thoughts operate upon my own."

There are three qualities which these words reveal to us in our Savior's teaching. First, there was clearness—"Verily, verily." Secondly, there was certainty—"Verily, verily, I say this and that unto you." Thirdly, there was solemnity—"Verily, verily, I say unto you." We must, therefore, give to Him, in return for clearness, the desire to understand Him. In return for certainty, the conviction of the Truth of what He says and, to His solemnity, we must respond with a deep sense of the importance of His teaching and act in accordance with what He says.

I. I am to speak, first, upon Christ's idiom, "Verily, verily," as denoting to US THE CLEARNESS OF WHAT THE SAVIOR SAID.

He knew what He meant when He spoke. Some people, when they speak, do not know what they mean and, when a man does not make you understand what he means, it generally is because he does not know the meaning of what he says. Indistinct speaking is usually the result of indistinct thinking. If men think clouds, they will preach clouds, but the Savior never spoke in that style which, at one time, was so common in our pulpits—a style imported partly from Germany and which was excessively cloudy and smoky, though it was thought by some people to be wonderfully profound and to be the very trademark of intellect! But there was not a sentence of that kind in all Christ's teaching. He was the clearest, most straightforward and most outspoken of all speakers. He knew what He meant to say and He meant His hearers also to know. It is true that the Jews of His day did not comprehend some of His teaching, but that was because judicial blindness had fallen upon them. The fault was not in the light, but in their bleared eyes. Turn to His teaching and see if anyone else ever spoke as simply as He did. A child can comprehend His parables. There are, in them, hidden Truths of God which are a mystery even to Christ's deeply-taught disciples, but Christ never mystified His hearers—He talked to them like a child, as He was— God's "Holy Child Jesus." He never laid aside the simplicity of childhood though He had all the dignity of fully-developed Manhood. He wore His heart upon His sleeve and spoke out what was on His mind in such plain, clear language that the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low were eager to listen to Him.

Now, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you wish to imitate your Master, speak with the same clearness. Say to your hearers, "Verily, verily, I have to proclaim to you, in Christ's name, this simple yet sublime Truth of God which I have myself grasped, and which I would also have you grasp." Never affect profundity among the poor and never use a theological jargon among the uneducated anywhere! If you have, in speaking, to show the Savior to your hearers, show Him in His own dress—do not cover Him up with the tawdry vestments of your gaudy language, for He will count them only as filthy rags. Tell sinners, in simple words, first about their sins and then about the Savior who can wash away their sins in His most precious blood. But go not a-hunting after novelties, for they will be of no service to perishing souls. If you are to be like Jesus, your teaching must be clear!

But next I need to say to those of you who are still unconverted, how necessary it is that you should clearly understand this clear teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ! There are some Truths upon which He spoke with very wonderful clearness—as for instance, concerning what sin is—how a look may be a sin and how a longing may be as much a sin as an action or a word is. Christ has also told us very clearly that sin must and will be punished. There never was anyone else so kind in heart as He was, yet He clearly taught the dreadful Truth of God that sinners shall be punished in Hell forever! There never can be any question about the Savior's view of sin as being a very evil thing and of the punishment of sin as being a very terrible thing. How very plainly, too, He speaks about the new birth! He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." And He was equally explicit concerning the way of salvation. He tells us that just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness and every bitten Israelite who looked to it was healed, so He, Himself, was lifted up upon the Cross and every sinner who trusts Him is saved forever! The teachings of Christ and of His Apostles concerning sinners being saved

through faith in Him are blessedly clear. The Gospels and Epistles tell us that a perfectly holy and Divine Substitute for sinners was required—and that Jesus was that Substitute and stood in the place of all His chosen people—and bore the punishment which was due for all their sins. If we are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, all our liabilities to Infinite Justice are forever discharged, for Jesus bore all our sins in His own body on the tree—and bore them so completely away that they shall be remembered against us no more forever!

I want to ask you who have not yet believed in Jesus, whether you really understand this Truth of God of which I have been speaking. Lest there should be anyone here under a delusion upon this matter, let me say, once and for all, that there is no salvation in any charm or ceremony invented or performed by men. The common notion is that there is some kind of charm which operates upon a person, young or old, who is brought to a font—that some virtue or other goes through the fingers of the "priest" who sprinkles the water because at his "ordination" he received something or other, from somebody or other, who received that something or other from some other body and so on, and so on, and so on right up to the Apostles! All that is sheer superstition as base as the witchcraft for which old women were burned in the evil days of the past!

[See Sermons #581, Volume 10—CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST, NOT TO THE FONT and #573, Volume 10—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION, the sermon by Mr. Spurgeon which has had a larger circulation than any other in the 3,052 published sermons to date—Read/download the entire

sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] How I wish that all men, women and children could be undeceived concerning it! Then there is a notion that a piece of bread, or a drop of wine, "consecrated" and dispensed by properly-authorized persons, will, somehow or other, charm away evil from a dying person. That is another superstition not a whit better than the fetish of the pretended rainmakers of South Africa! Neither the water, nor the bread and wine can convey Divine Grace to an unbeliever! But if I am a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, my being buried with Him in Baptism [See Sermon #1627, Volume 27, BAPTISM—A BURIAL— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] reminds me that I am saved through His death and burial—and if I, as a Believer in Christ, eat the bread and drink the wine at the Communion Table, those suggestive symbols help me, as Paul says, to "show the Lord's death till He comes." That is all. There is no charm in the water, or the bread, or the wine in themselves, whatever incantations any so-called "priest" may have muttered over them!

Then, never imagine that we cannot understand what the Gospel of Christ really is. Someone perhaps says, "Well, you see, Sir, I am not learned. I am no scholar, so I cannot understand the Gospel." My dear Friend, there are many people who cannot understand the Gospel just because they are scholars! They know too much to understand it—they

Volume 53 3have so much of what they think is knowledge that they are prejudiced against it! Knowledge may prejudice a person as much as ignorance does. What you need to know is simply this—that you are a sinner and that if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He is your Savior. The result of believing in Him will be this—knowing that you are saved because God tells you that you are, you love God whom you dreaded before and, loving Him, you naturally ask, "What can I do to please Him?" So you give up your old sins and, led on by the impulse of love, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, you seek after holiness! The things that concern your soul's salvation

are plain enough for a child to comprehend! If you are lost, it will not be a mystery that damns you— and if you are ever to be saved, it is the simplicity of the Gospel that will save you! The Truths of God that relate to your ruin through sin—and the only remedy for that ruin—through the Grace of God, are "as plain as a pikestaff," as our common proverb puts it.

"Still," says one, "I have often listened to the preaching of the Gospel, but I have failed to understand it." Then ask the Spirit of God to guide you into it! He is waiting to instruct sincere seekers. Let me ask you whether you have ever really tried to understand the Gospel. "Well, Sir, I have heard Dr. So-and-So and Mr. So-and-So." Yes, but perhaps they have only muddled you. Have you read the Bible itself? He who wishes to drink pure water had better go to the wellhead. He who wishes to find the Truth of God had better come to these sacred pages, for here he will find it pure and unalloyed. Have you imitated the Jews at Berea who "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"? There are many people who condemn the Scriptures, but no man who has read them in the right spirit ever condemns them. You may remember the story of the City Missionary who was arguing with a cobbler—a man who thought himself a very wise skeptic although he had never read the Bible. He said he never would do so, yet he knew it was a very bad book! So the missionary said to him, "I bought a pair of boots yesterday which cost me twelve and sixpence—do you think they were worth the money?" He replied, "Possibly they were, but I can't say positively without seeing them." The missionary said, "But, if you are a cobbler and understand your business, you can certainly tell me their value without seeing them." "Why you must consider me a fool to think that I can judge of a thing I never saw." "Yes," said the missionary, "I did think you were a fool because you have been judging and condemning the Bible which you have never studied." So I ask you, dear Friend—Have you read the Bible? Have you studied it? If you say that you cannot comprehend it, I ask— Have you ever tried to do so? Do not plead that you cannot understand the Gospel if you have never tried to understand it! But if you humbly ask the Holy Spirit to teach you its meaning as you read it, I believe the Light of the Truth of God will soon enter your soul.

Let me ask you another question—Have you put into practice what you really do understand of the Scriptures? You know that you are sinful—have you confessed your sinfulness to God? You know that there is a Savior from sin and that He is to be laid hold of by faith—have you trusted Him to save you? With the Truth of God so clear there is no need for you to perish in the dark! I read in the paper, yesterday, the notice of a reward to be given to anyone who would furnish information concerning the injury done to a certain buoy off the coast. The buoy was described as being on such-and-such a sand and, as it was 20 feet in height, it must have been injured through sheer carelessness or willful wickedness. So, if you have rightly read the Scriptures, or have heard the Gospel plainly preached, it will be impossible for you to perish by accident—you will perish willfully and your blood will be upon your own head. When Christ brings the printed Gospel before your eyes, as it were, in capital letters—if you will not read it and understand it—you must perish as a spiritual suicide, which may God forbid!

II. The time flies so quickly that I must pass on to notice, in the next place, that THE EXPRESSION, "VERILY, VERILY," AS THE SPECIAL IDIOM OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, SIGNIFIED CERTAINTY.

He knew that what He said was true and, therefore, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Untold mischief has been done in our country by the kind of preaching which was very common at one time, namely, for the preacher to speak as if he did not know what the Truth of God is and must be pardoned for intruding his opinions! If a man does not know the Truth, let him hold his tongue until he does. "I believed, therefore have I spoken," said the Psalmist. And he alone has the right to speak who speaks that which he believes and, therefore, knows. The Lord Jesus never hesitates as to what He shall say, His language never halts! His "Verily, verily, I say unto you," is the utterance of One who knows the Truth of God and who speaks it as One who is assured that it is the Truth of God.

On our part, there should be a suitable response to Christ's certainty. If we believe Him to be the Son of God speaking the Truth of God to us with absolute certainty, let us receive with certainty what He says to us. "But," says one, "there are so many different opinions that I do not know which to believe." What have you to do with men's opinions? Supposing there are 10,000 "isms" in the world—what have they to do with you? If you are lost, it will not abate the flames of Hell if you say, "There were so many isms in the world I did not know which to choose." There was but one Truth, for Christ said, "I am the Truth." If you had believed Him you would have been saved by Him. There are, today, many persons who raise all sorts of questions—there always have been and there always will be such persons while this dispensation lasts—but what have you to do with them? Your business is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and leave all those questions alone!

"But," says another, "even good men differ." I know they do, but if you go into a watchmaker's shop, you find that even good watches and clocks differ in some respects. Yet that fact does not affect Greenwich mean time which is the standard for all the watches and clocks in the country! So, supposing that one good man sees one side of a Truth and another sees another side of it—what good man ever asks you to trust in him? You have listened to my preaching—some of you for many years—did I

Volume 53 5ever ask you to follow my guidance except just as far as the Scriptures prove the truth of what I preach to you? With God's Word in your hand as the map of the road to Heaven, ask His Spirit to guide you and He will guide you all the way!

All that Christ teaches is certainly true and there are some things which He tells us which are absolutely essential for us to learn. For instance, "You must be born-again." Or this, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." There is no doubt that at the Last Great Day, Christ "will judge the world in righteousness." We must all stand before His Great White Throne to receive from Him the final sentence which shall fix our eternal destiny. If you are an unbeliever, you are condemned already—and if you live and die an unbeliever, you must be driven from His Presence into a hopeless eternity. All these things are certainties. There are many fictions in the world, but these things are not fictions— neither are they trifles. And I do pray you to believe these Truths of God and to draw the right practical inferences from them.

There are also some Truths about which Christ says, "Verily, verily," which ought to be a great comfort to you. For instance, it is certainly true that if you confess your sins to Him, He will forgive you. It is certainly true that if you trust in Jesus, He will give you rest and peace, and you shall be, "accepted in the Beloved." It is certainly true that if you commit your soul into Christ's hands you shall never perish, and no one shall ever be able to pluck you out of His hands. [See Sermon

#726, Volume 12—LIFE

ETERNAL and #2120, Volume 35—THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There are many blessed assurances in the Word of God upon which you may surely rely. God help you to rely upon them now!

There are other Truths in God's Word which you will find to be sure if you test and try them. I might address myself to many a man here and say to him, "Brother, did you not put Christ's Word to the test in the time of trouble, and did you not prove it to be true?" And I know that the answer would be, "Yes, that I did!" I might pick out many a humble man and woman here who have had a heavy task to bring up their children as they have done and many stern struggles with poverty and affliction, and I might say to them, "My Brother, my Sister, has not Christ been precious to you?" And I know that the answer would be, "Yes! That He has! He has fulfilled every word of promise that He ever gave us to rely upon." There is no one who can ever convict Christ of a lie—there is not a friend or a foe who can truthfully say, "He deceived me." "Verily, verily," is stamped upon every promise, every precept and every threat—and He will prove all of them to be true to the end of time and throughout eternity!

Then, as these things are certain, let us act upon them. O Sirs, in a short time we shall have done with preaching and hearing the Gospel! I fear that many people come to our places of worship in the same spirit in which they go to places of amusement and that the main things of which they think are—how the preacher puts his message, whether he is fluent and eloquent and whether he interests them or not. Yes, but that is not the principal matter about which we should be concerned! You and I will soon be before the bar of God! I shall have to prove that I faithfully preached what I believed to be the Truth of God—and you will have to prove whether you accepted it and acted upon it! And I charge you all, before the living God, at whose bar you must soon stand, not to treat the Gospel as if it were mere fiction. Go not away from this building as though you had been watching a play, or listening to an organ recital which might or might not mean anything to you. There is a real Hell—will you be shut up in it forever? There is a real Heaven—will you be shut out of it forever? There is a real Savior who died upon the Cross for sinners— will you despise and reject Him? And, above all, there sits a real God in whom we live, and move, and have our being—shall we continue to forget Him, break His Laws as if we had liberty to do what we would and despise Him as if He were a man like ourselves? Oh, by the "Verily, verily," of the Christ of God, I beseech you to lay to heart the certainty, the reality of His teachings and let them have their due weight upon your spirits! May the Spirit of God make it to be so!

III. The third point was to be that CHRIST'S "VERILY, VERILY" MEANT SOLEMNITY.

Christ was a very solemn Preacher, though He was by no means a dull Preacher. There are some speakers who confound dullness with solemnity, but Christ's discourses were always interesting. How He abounded in parables and metaphors! The children listened with pleasure to His teachings, yet how solemn it always was, and how forcibly the Master proved the solemnity of His speech by the solemnity of His life! Those nights of prayer that He spent on the lone mountainside

show that His was no mock earnestness. And that life of untiring labor showed how real and intense was His zeal. And His death, as with bloodred seals proved that, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." It was the same Christ who said, "Verily, verily," who died upon the Cross, rose again and went up into Glory to make intercession for the transgressors!

The solemnity of Christ's words and work should cause us to listen to His Gospel with a corresponding seriousness and solemnity. If you are worldly and earth-bound, you will not attach that importance to the Gospel of Christ that you should. To many of you, the Truth that you need to be saved does not seem to come home with power. If I were, in the middle of a sermon, to begin to talk about the way to get money, the attention of many of you would be far more intense than it is when I am speaking about the salvation of immortal souls. If I were to discuss the price of British bonds, many ears would be at once opened to catch every syllable! Whereas when I talk of the incalculable price that Jesus paid for the redemption of the souls of men, the Truth makes no more impression upon many men's minds than oil would upon a slab of marble! Your souls, the best part of your real selves, concern you not, O you foolish sons of men! You treat your souls as if they were dirt, yet you prize the things of time and sense as if they were all that you had! You have a notion that these things concern people a long way off—people who are very wicked and do not go to any place of worship, or other people in this

Volume 53 7congregation who are somehow more fitted than you are to receive my message! But, Sir, the Gospel is for you, and God is speaking by His Word and by His servant, to you! I wish that you would end this folly of passing on to others the Gospel that is meant for yourself.

In closing, I must just mention one or two reflections concerning the solemnity of the Gospel message. First, remember that the Gospel concerns our never-dying souls. Most people think a great deal about that which concerns the body. There is much talk about an operation, wisely performed by an eminent surgeon upon the poor body which must soon become food for worms. Yet little or nothing is said about the soul which is so vastly more precious! The soul of an emperor or the soul of a beggar is of the same value in God's sight. "Where does it take its flight when its earthly cage is broken?" Is that a question which is never asked by some of you? If so, what arrant fools you must be! O blessed Spirit of God, teach us the solemnity of the Gospel which concerns the soul which must live forever in raptures or in woe!

This Gospel also concerns the never-ending eternity. We are not going into another time-state that shall come to an end, but into that eternity which shall know no close. I can make no meaning out of Christ's words if it is not so—and He said, concerning the wicked, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." The word is the same in each case in the original. Oh, eternity, eternity, eternity, who can conceive what it is? A million millions of years would be less than a moment compared with eternity—and that sum multiplied by a million millions a million times told would be but as a drop in a bucket compared with that which is everlasting! O Sirs, as I know that I am to live forever in such a state as I shall die in, my first concern is to be ready for death that I may be ready for my eternal future! Is it not so with you also? Oh, I do implore you, trifle not with eternity and with your never-dying souls! Trifle not with the God who can cast you into Hell forever! Trifle not with Christ whose hands and feet were nailed to the accursed tree for sinners such as you! Trifle not with His precious blood for that is your only hope of

redemption! Trifle not with the Holy Spirit for if He should leave you to perish, your case would be hopeless! Trifle not with your Sabbaths—you will wish to have them back again when you are near death. Trifle not with the Gospel—what would the lost in Hell not give to hear another proclamation of mercy? The devil does not trifle—he is very earnestly seeking your destruction! God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are not trifling with you—and we are not trifling with you! We long to preach the Gospel to you more earnestly, more fully and more faithfully than ever—and we pray to God to help us do so and lament when we fear that we have failed. Trifle not when everything around you seems to be in earnest and especially when the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking out of this chapter, says to you, "Verily, verily, I of the crown of thorns. I of the pierced hands and feet speak plainly, certainly and solemnly to you and bid you look unto Me that you may be saved."

I never go out of this pulpit feeling so utterly cast down as when I have been trying to deal with the consciences of the ungodly. I wish I could grip each one of you by the hand and look you in the face, and say, "Man, Woman, are you going to die without a Savior? Oh, be not so foolish, so mad!" I would tell every young man here how, when I was myself a young man, I was led to look by faith to the Savior and I have found it a blessed thing to rest in Him ever since. And I would say to him, "Brother, come with me to the Cross of Calvary and rest in Jesus, and begin to live a holy and useful life—and you shall find yourself truly blessed among men." I cannot come round and speak personally to you all, but will you let me follow you to your bedside and, if you think of getting into bed tonight without a prayer for your soul's salvation, just imagine that you feel my hand upon your shoulder and hear me say to you, "What? No offering of a prayer to God?" I was about to say, "Stepping into your bed," but I thought that it might become your sepulcher, for you may die there! As many have done who went to bed as thoughtlessly and prayerless as you have often done. But if you trust in Jesus and then fall asleep for the last time on earth, you will wake up amid the splendors of eternal bliss!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 3:1-18.

If we were asked to read to a dying man who did not know the Gospel,

we would probably select this chapter as the most suitable one for such an occasion. And what is good for dying men is good for us all, for that is what we are—and how soon we may actually be at the gates of death, none of us can tell.

Verses 1, 2. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night. We do not know the names of many other Pharisees, but we do know the name of this one because God had loved him with an everlasting love and, therefore, with loving kindness did He draw him to the Savior's feet! "The same came to Jesus by night." Possibly he was too busy to come during the day. Anyway, it was better to come to Jesus late at night than not to come to Him at all! From the fact that after our Lord's death, it is said that he was the man who "at the first came to Jesus by night," I gather that he did come then partly out of timidity and partly also out of candor. He wanted to know more about Christ before he committed himself, so he came privately to see and hear for himself. It does not matter if any of you also come to Christ by night if you like. Our Savior has a night-bell to His door and He is quite willing to be the Physician of your soul—even if you ring Him up at midnight!

2. And said unto Him, Rabbi. He begins very respectfully, and so far, so good. But then, Judas said, "Hail, Master," and kissed Christ when he went to Gethsemane to betray Him.

2. We know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him. Dear Friends, if any of you do not know all about Christ that you wish to know, or that can be known, make use of what you do know about Him. Nicodemus had

Volume 53 9not yet learned the truth of Christ's Deity, but he knew that He was a teacher sent from God, and that God was with Him.

3. Jesus answered and said unto Him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. [See Sermon

#130, Volume 3—REGENERATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] Christ's formula, "Verily, verily, I say unto you,"

was a new style of speech for the Pharisees to hear, for they quoted Rabbi this, and Rabbi that—but Jesus gives Himself as His own sufficient authority, with an egoism which cannot be blamed and which no true disciple of His ever questions, for Christ is, Himself, the Truth, and whatever He says is to be humbly received by all His followers. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." He has no notion of what it really is. He cannot even see it, for he is blind to it until he is born-again. It is for this reason that our most lucid explanations of the Gospel are altogether lost upon unregenerate men and women. However bright a light God may make our ministry to be, bright light is of no use to blind men and they must be born-again before they can even see the Kingdom of God.

4. Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? His questions proved that he could not see the Kingdom of God. He blundered over the letter of Christ's message. He misunderstood the metaphor that Christ used—but did Jesus therefore not give Nicodemus any further instruction? Oh, no! Listen.

5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. There must be a purifying operation upon his heart and mind, he must be spiritually washed and cleansed, and the Spirit of God must create him anew. Otherwise he cannot possibly enter into the Kingdom of God.

6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So that the best child who was ever born, even though he were, like Saul of Tarsus, "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews," yet even he, inasmuch as he "is born of the flesh, is flesh," and not "spirit." Everything which comes to us by our first birth can be nothing better than flesh—and what can you get out of flesh but flesh? The only "evolution" that can come of the flesh is corruption! There must be another birth if you are to get anything but flesh—"that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Fleshly things are understood by the flesh, and spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Hence the absolute necessity of a second birth, a Spirit birth, that we may first see and then enter the spiritual Kingdom of God.

7. Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again. This ruler of the Jews was full of astonishment at this strange Doctrine, so Christ said to Him, "Marvel not."

8. The wind blows. That is, the Spirit blows. 8. Where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from

where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. This is a great mystery and our Savior connected it with the most mysterious thing in the whole realm of Nature—the wind—a thing which has never been seen and which must remain a mystery to us, at least while we are upon the earth. Christ uses this mysterious force as an emblem of the Holy Spirit and of those who are "born of the Spirit."

9. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? He was puzzled and perplexed, like a man in a maze. The Savior had given him something to think about—and I wish that when we preach to a congregation, or when we talk to individuals, we would not aim at dazzling them with our fine phrases, but would seek to set the Truth of God before their minds, that it might lie there to be studied, and thought of, and to be like seed which, in later days, would germinate and bring forth a harvest to God's praise and Glory! Our Savior is an example to all of us who preach and, in this instance, He shows us the wisdom of not keeping back the mysteries of the Kingdom of God! I am greatly afraid that many preachers would have begun by talking to Nicodemus of some point that was common to both Judaism and Christianity and that they would have gone on to apologize for the peculiar mysteries of Christianity, all of which would have been a waste of breath and worse than that. Do not so, my Brothers, but speak out the Truth boldly and leave the Eternal Spirit to make use of it as He pleases!

10-12. Jesus answered and said unto Him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and you receive not Our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? The Savior as good as told Nicodemus that He did not come to argue or to reason with him, but to bear witness to absolute certainties of which He Himself was absolutely sure. So He said to him, "If you do not receive Our witness concerning these things, which lie on the very threshold of the Kingdom"—yet, mark you, He had been speaking about regeneration, the great mystery of the new birth—"it is of no use going on to still higher themes." So it is evident that the Kingdom of Christ requires great faith—faith on the very threshold of it—to believe the wondrous mystery of the new birth and still greater faith as deeper Truths, the more heavenly things of the Kingdom are revealed to us.

13. And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven. Now Nicodemus must have been indeed puzzled! Here was a Man who had come down from Heaven, yet who had gone up to Heaven and was still there, although He was at that moment talking to Nicodemus! Without the Spirit of God to explain the mystery, he could not make heads or tails of it.

14, 15. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. [See Sermon #153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE

BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] Mark, dear Friends, the blending of the different Truths of God in this wonderful chapter! There is no keeping back the necessity of the new birth and there is no cutting down of the

glorious

Volume 53 11 Doctrine of Salvation by Faith in Jesus! He puts the whole matter as broadly as it could be put.

16, 17. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. If any one of you says, "I cannot cause myself to be born-again," that is quite true. Yet listen to this message in the same chapter which speaks of the new birth—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

18. He that believes on Him is not condemned. [See Sermons #361, Volume 7—

NONE BUT JESUS—FIRST PART and #362, Volume 7—NONE BUT JESUS—SECOND PART—

Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.] That is a grand Truth of God!

18. But He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. His not believing is the master-sin, the surest evidence of his being, in his heart, an enemy to God. If he refuses to trust Christ, the matchless gift of the Father's love, he must be desperately set on mischief and he "is condemned already." These two Truths of the necessity of the new birth and of the fact that everyone who believes on Christ is saved, are quite consistent and in perfect harmony with each other. God grant to us the Grace to know them both by experience! Never talk about "reconciling" them, for they have never fallen out with one another!. God grant that we may find them both true in our own lives, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

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

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

John 3,7 #1455 - Every Man's Necessity

EVERY MAN'S NECESSITY

NO. 1455

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"You must be born again."

John 3:7.

WHEN men are perishing all around you it would be cruel to waste time

in attempting to interest their minds or to amuse their fancies. We must do something more practical and give earnest heed to their pressing necessities. Is it famine which slays them? Let us feed them. Is it cold? Let us supply them with covering. Is it disease? Let us administer medicine. When the case is urgent, we confine ourselves to necessities and attend with our whole heart to that which must have our attention. That which may can wait, but that which must demands our immediate care.

Now, the spiritual needs of men are urgent and among them the most pressing is their regeneration—they must be born again or they are lost! Therefore, at this time we will dwell on this topic and give it our whole consideration, letting other interesting matters wait till this most weighty business is happily over. This is a must and we must press it upon you at once with our whole heart! Our earnest desire is for a great ingathering of souls to the garner of salvation, but in order to this they must be born again. We have had many of you hovering round about us like birds around the fowler, but you are not, as yet, taken in the Gospel net. This state of things cannot content us—we need to see you decided for Christ and truly born again.

You have long been hearers, but, alas, you remain hearers, only, and are not "doers of the Word of God." We do not want the fault to lie with us—if you continue unsaved it shall not be because we have not preached the Gospel and kept to preaching it and preached it as a matter of life and death! Again, then, we aim at the one point, the point of absolute necessity—"You must be born again." We trust that if one arrow does not reach the mark, another may. At any rate, we will continue driving at the one target—the conversion of your souls. O you who as yet have not been brought to know the Lord, may the Holy Spirit guide the arrow at this hour!

And now we will have a little simple talk about the great experience called regeneration, or the new birth, without which no man can see the kingdom of Heaven, much less enter it.

I. And we shall remark concerning it, in the first place, that the change which is worked in us by the new birth is MOST THOROUGH. "You must be born again." A new birth is the most sweeping and entire process conceivable. It is, in fact, more than a change, it is a creation. Regeneration is a

great deal more than reformation of life, or a becoming religious, for it is not, "You must be washed, you must be improved, you must be elevated," but, "you must be born." It is not enough that the present life, as already possessed, should be renovated; that the existing nature should receive fresh vigor and new tone, but "you must be born again"—a new life must be received and no improving the present life will suffice in its place.

It is also a great deal more than any change of opinion. I am always afraid of those persons who glory in being converted from one set of religious opinions to another. The best converts to a Church are those who are brought into it from the world—those who migrate from other sections of Christianity are not often the most valuable acquisitions. Sometimes, like the convicts who leave their country for their country's good, they benefit their party best by leaving it and do not come to the newly adopted section of the Church as an unmixed gain. The text says not, "You must change your opinions and drink in new notions," but, "You must have a new nature; you must be born again." Notions may be altered again and again and yet the man may be no nearer being a child of God—but let the nature be changed by the Holy Spirit—and then the matter is accomplished!

This it is and nothing short of this can land a man in Heaven—he must become a new creature in Christ Jesus. The process of the new birth is so thorough that it is a great deal more than an alteration of a man's way of thinking, even upon the best of topics. A man may now think it his duty to be religious, whereas once he was debauched. He may now conceive it to be his duty to be sober, whereas before he was a drunk. He may feel it his duty, now, to be diligent, whereas before he was a sluggard. But all these put together would not amount to a new birth! We rejoice in reformation of any sort. The less sin there is in the world the better, but, for all that, the vital point will not have been reached with all the alterations of thought and even of life, of which a man is capable!

The text remains in force after all the renovations, conversions and reformations that are possible to unaided flesh and blood—and it cries with stern, unchanging voice—"You must be born again." The person concerned may have passed through a long series of ceremonies. He may have been received with a welcome into a so-called church and from the hands of those who think themselves priests there may have distilled the aqueous imposture which is said to regenerate the soul. But there is something more needed than priests can convey, or than water can effect. Our Lord Jesus Christ meant something far other than the hocus pocus of an empty form when He said, "You must be born again."

I say in the presence of all that have been baptized in infancy and all that have been baptized in adult age but were not Believers—you, even you, baptized infidels—"You must be born again!" If you have been baptized and re-baptized, but are still unbelievers and have not the Spirit of God in your souls, "you must be born again." What does all this mean? And what is the signification of this so thorough change? Do not the words evidently mean that a new nature must be created in us? For a life, a nature is the production of a birth. At a birth there comes into the world a life which was not there before.

There must come into us a new life to which, by nature, we are perfect strangers—something far beyond that which belongs to us as we are born after the flesh—a life that was not latent in the infant, to be gradually developed in the training of the child, but a life which is altogether absent till Divine Grace implants it there. "You must be born again"—you must be created again, or as the

Scriptures say, "Begotten again unto a lively hope." The life within you must be as fresh a creation as was the light when God spoke it, or as was the world when God formed it out of nothing! A work of Divine power must be exercised upon you equal to that which raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and gave Him Glory!

With a new life in the matter of our ordinary birth there begins a new experience. To the new-born child everything is new. Every pain, every sensation of pleasure is all novel to him—he has known nothing of all this before. And though we may have attained to manhood, or even to old age when we are born again, the spiritual life is all a fresh experience. There are new feelings of contrition; there is a new faith; there is a new joy, a new hope—everything is new—"Old things have passed away and all things have become new." Though the man may have traversed many paths and experienced many sensations, yet the moment he is born again, he is a stranger in a strange land and he is led in a way which he knows not and in paths which he has not seen. All young souls just born to God, however old they may be as to the bodily reckoning, rejoice in the sacred novelty of the new life and they thank and bless God who has put His hands, a second time, to the work and quickened them into newness of life.

Now, as there is a new life, a new nature and a new experience, so is there to the child born and the man regenerated a new world. It is all new to the child—its brothers and sisters surprise it. When it is taken into the open air and sees the green fields for the first time, it marvels at them! To the little one everything is fresh. It lives in a museum; it is surrounded with wonders! Even the toys which grown-up people look upon with so much contempt are quite marvels to the little one—it is charmed with them all. A Christian, a man or woman born again, lives in a new world. It is all new to him now, as I remember to have heard a young girl say, when first she found the Savior. When she came to confess her faith in Christ she said, "Either I am altogether changed, or else the world is"—and I could not help telling her I hoped it was both—I hoped she herself was changed and that this change had produced the other, so that all things had become new.

There is a new Heaven and a new earth reserved for us, by-and-by, and even now, while we are in this world, it is no longer to us what it is to the carnal man. To the twice-born, the world is turned upside down. The things we once loved we cease to care for. Former objects of ambition we count but dross, while things that were contemptible become to us objects of supreme solicitude. The Holy Spirit having changed us, our views of all around us are entirely different. Such must be your experience, dear Hearer, or you will live as carnal men and die in your sins. You must experience this Divine creation, no matter who you may be—there can be no exceptions—you must know this great change or be lost!

You may have been dandled on the lap of piety; the name of Jesus may have mingled with the hush of your first lullaby; you may scarcely, at first, have heard any music but that of holy hymns; you may have been taught morality and sanctity by the example of many generations of ancestors. But, be you who you may, or what you may, you must receive a new life and you must pass through a new experience—and you must live in a new world or be lost! You must live in the spiritual world where all is new. You must converse with God, a thing unknown to you before. You must converse with His Son to whom you have been a stranger. You must feel the power and energy of the Spirit working in you, a matter which you have never known till now, or there is no hope for you!

Note that every birth brings into operation a new force. A new worker is born. He is feeble as yet, but those little feet will yet be strong for running and those tiny hands will yet become dexterous at some useful craft. And so, when a soul is born to God, it feels a new power within and it becomes a new force. It is obedient to a power which it never recognized before and a power is put forth from it which it had not been able to exercise before and did not even understand. A new power has come among men when another soul is born to God—the spiritual world is stronger and the carnal world is all the weaker for the birth of another spiritual man.

I do not know how to put the matter better than this, but I think I have shown you that regeneration is a most thorough change. To be born again is no child's play. It is not enough for a man to rise under a sermon and say, "I have been impressed and touched by it and I believe I am converted." There is a vast difference between saying, "I am born again," and really undergoing the heavenly birth. It is not making a profession, or even maintaining it with credit for years which will suffice, for, alas, some have seemed almost Apostles and yet have been altogether sons of perdition! You must come to know vitally, indeed, and of a truth in your own soul what it is for the flesh to be crucified with Christ and for a new life to be implanted in you supernaturally as the work of the Holy Spirit, or else you cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. The work is radical, spiritual, marvelous, Divine!

II. In the second place it is MOST WONDERFUL. It is most wonderful in the sense of mystery—as to the manner of it. It is not easy to preach from this text and attempt to go minutely into details for, if we did so, we might venture too far. I have read treatises upon the subject which were far too destitute of delicacy and calculated to disgust rather than to impress. We do not pry and must not pry into a Divine secret. "You hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes, or where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

Who knows how the Holy Spirit works? That He works by means of the Word of God we know. That He blesses the Truth of God read in a book or heard from the minister—this we know—but how it is He enters into the heart; how it is He creates a spirit within us; how he begets in us the spiritual life—who can tell but God only? But then we do not need to know—it is enough for us to be assured of the fact—the manner we need not pry into. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." They know experimentally what it is to be born again, but they themselves could not explain how it is that the sacred wind blows, nor how the Spirit operates upon the human heart.

Many discussions there have been as to whether the Spirit of God, as it were, comes nakedly into contact with the nature of man, or whether He always works in and by Truth and thought, and so on. Into all this it is not necessary for us to go. We would rather admire, wonder and adore, for these are better than merely to comprehend since a man may understand all mysteries and yet be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. It is a mystery as to the supernaturalness of the operation, for true regeneration is always supernatural. There is no doubt that moral persuasion does much with men; that the influence of association will often improve men's manners and habits; that great results may flow from education, especially if it is of the right kind. And that much may be developed in mankind that is admirable, honest, lovely, and of good repute.

But this is nothing to the purpose, since it is not what our Savior meant—it falls short of the new birth and is, indeed, quite another thing. The Holy Spirit, the third Person in the blessed Trinity must as much come to work upon us as God came forth to work upon this world in its creation, or

else we are not born again. It is not enough that we, of ourselves and in the energy of our old nature begin to pray, repent and so on, for all that which can come of our flesh will still be flesh. In regeneration it is the Spirit who begins by infusing the life and then the new nature begins to pray and repent. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and, therefore, the new birth must be a spiritual operation in order to produce that spiritual nature without which we cannot see and enter into the things of God.

This is a solemn matter for you, my Hearer, if you have been merely an attendant upon the means of Grace and a lover of the outward forms of religion. Do I mean to tell you that you must undergo a change which is beyond your own working, which all the men in this world and all the angels in Heaven could not work in you, but which God Himself must perform? I do mean that—I mean nothing less than that! "Am I to understand," you say, "that almighty power must work upon me as much as in my creation?" I mean that and that it needs as much power to cause you to be born again as it did to make a world! Yes, and that the same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead when He had slept three days in the grave is needed in all its fullness to raise you from your death of sin— and must be exerted if ever you are raised at all.

It is a wonderful thing that the Spirit of God should condescend to undertake this work and that the Lord should set Himself a second time to the work. It is surprising that when the vessel was marred upon the wheel and spoiled, instead of breaking it up and consigning it to destruction, He should put forth all His power again and fashion the clay to His own model! He stoops to make us twice born, new-created, begotten again, that we might at the last come to wear the image of Jesus, the First-Born among many Brethren. "You must be born again"—the Infinite Jehovah must deign to be, a second time, our Creator or we must hopelessly perish!

This work is wonderful because of the grandeur of the relationship into which it introduces us. The child that is born has a father from the very fact of its birth and we that are born from above cry, "Abba, Father," from the very fact that we are regenerated! Adoption gives us the rights of children, but only regeneration gives us the nature of children! Because we are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." If I have been born again, no matter what my station in life or position in society, God is my Father and it follows that Jesus Christ is my Brother—and this not merely in form and in name as men call each other Brethren when there is no actual relationship—but there is a real relationship between us and Christ Jesus and the Divine Father, for we are made "partakers of the Divine Nature."

We are the sons of God, and if sons of God, then are we brothers and sisters of Christ! It must be so and it follows from this that if children, then heirs, and if Christ is the heir, we are joint-heirs with Him. My Brethren, what privileges spring out of the relationship which arises from the new birth, for our Father pledges Himself for our support, for our comfort, for our education, for all that is necessary for our perfection in the day of the home-bringing when we shall see Him face to face! What can happen to a man so great as to be born again? Suppose some of the poorest of the earth who have swept the streets for a paltry pittance should suddenly be elevated by royal favor to the peerage. Or imagine that by some revolution of the wheel of Providence they should become emperors and kings—yet what of that?

The change would be extraordinary and men would wonder at it, for the passages in history which have been thought most noteworthy have been those wherein paupers have mounted from the

dunghill to the throne and fishermen have cast aside their rough garments to put on the imperial purple. But these strides from nothingness to greatness are inconsiderable and trifling compared with rising from being a slave of Satan to become a son of God! To be elevated by God Himself from the darkness and degradation and bondage under which we are brought by the Fall and by actual sin, to the liberty, to the glory, to the eternal blessedness of the children of God—this surpasses all conception! This can only be ours through our being born again!

Our first birth makes us sons of Adam; our second birth makes us sons of God! Born of the flesh, we inherit corruption—we must be born of the Spirit to inherit incorruption. We come into this world heirs of sorrow because we are sons of the fallen man. Our new life comes into the new world an heir of Glory, because it is descended from the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven! Thus I have spoken upon the wonderful character of this work as well as upon the thoroughness of it.

III. Now, let us remark, in the third place, that wonderful and mysterious as the new birth must always be, it is MOST MANIFEST. The house knows when a child is born. There are mysteries surrounding its birth, but the fact is apparent enough. You shall soon hear its cry in the nursery and before long its prattle in the parlor. You shall see the joy of the parents as they clasp their offspring and the care with which they watch for its good. So in the new birth, we know not how the Spirit works, but we know that He does work and we soon see that a marvelous change has come over those whom He has made possessors of the heavenly seed, creatures of the new life! Those who know converted persons best are among the first to perceive the transforming miracle of Grace.

Do you not think that Elstow knew when John Bunyan had found the Savior? The bell-ringers knew it—there was no more Sabbath-breaking! And the few poor, godly people that used to meet at Bedford knew it, for he crept into their midst and began to ask them about the things which had become the delight of his soul. We sometimes hear of a person being born again and not knowing it—a somewhat singular matter. Yet I suppose that such an event, after a fashion, very commonly happens in the Episcopalian denomination, because if persons are born again in infant baptism there are thousands in London who have undergone the change! But I am sure that they cannot be sure of it, for their own lives would not tell them so and their own emotions and feelings would not lead them to any such belief.

Regeneration is a poor business if these baptized rebels are regenerate! Why, at that rate our prisons swarm with regenerated thieves and our streets are infested with regenerated harlots! And occasionally we have regenerate murderers—all born again in their baptism, made children of God, members of Christ and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. The lie is sickening! The devil himself laughs at it! Of all transparent falsehoods, surely that of baptismal regeneration is the grossest! It is a marvel that men who live and walk among sane persons should ever fall into it. Ah, Sirs, where the true Heaven-given life is found, there is something to show for it!

Does a man say, "I am regenerate"? Come, then, Sir, what is the difference in you? What life do you lead? Have you a higher objective than the ordinary sons of men? Are you swayed by higher motives? Are there diviner impulses pulsing in your soul than those which stir the hearts of worldlings? "For except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees," the best of worldlings, "you cannot enter into the kingdom of God." If the love of Christ within does not make us better than the best of worldly men, we give no evidence of having experienced the renewing

work of God the Holy Spirit! The heavenly life is very manifest—and it is all the more so from the fact that there are certain signs which always attend and attest the new birth.

Persons may be born again and yet they may not be able to see with us in certain points of doctrine, but there are some things which all the regenerate agree about. For first, every soul that is born again repents of its sin. If a man lives in his sin as he used to do, he must not pretend that he is a twice-born man, or he will mightily deceive himself. If he can look upon sin in the same light as he did before; if he can find pleasure in it, yes—if he does not unfeignedly turn from it with loathing and seek the mercy of God to blot it out—he knows nothing of what regeneration is! Again all the regenerate have faith. They all agree in finding the sole ground of their hope in the blood and merit of Jesus. Meet them anywhere and they will tell you they have no confidence except in the Savior's precious blood. He is all their salvation and all their desire. They rest upon this Rock, every one of them, and no matter what high professors they may be, or what lofty offices they hold in the Church, if Christ is not their one and only trust, they know not what it is to be born again!

In addition to this, all that have passed from death unto life pray. If it really rises from the heart, prayer is an infallible mark of the new birth. If it can be said of a man, "He does not pray," then he is still dead in his sins, the Spirit of God has not renewed his soul. I might mention some other holy signs which are invariable accompaniments of the new birth, but these three will suffice for all practical purposes. You can test yourselves, Beloved, by them. Have you repented? Have you faith towards God? Do you rejoice to draw near to God in prayer? If these things are in you, they are marks of the new life, for they were never yet found in the spiritually dead!

Do you groan over sin? A corpse does not groan—gracious mourning over transgression is one of the surest proofs of inward spiritual life. Trust in Jesus is an equally clear sign of spiritual life, for the dead man does not know what it is to trust. And genuine prayer is equally a certain token of life received from above. A pang of penitential grief, a thought of holy trust and a yearning of inward prayer are more than all the unregenerate upon earth can compass, even though they should be doctors of divinity or cardinals of the church!

This new life, the new birth, is a very manifest thing from the power that it puts into men after it has had time to develop itself. At first converts are trembling and weak, but if they have received the new life they gather strength and there is a power in it which the Church soon rejoices in and which the devil trembles at. This power, of course, can be kept under restraint by unbelief and other follies, but it ought to have full range and should never be repressed. I often wish our Christian people were a little more natural in their expression of what they feel. If any Brother cries, "Amen" very heartily after prayer, many look at him, but in the primitive Church it was the universal custom of those who joined in prayer to say, "Amen," by way of endorsing it and making it their own. I wonder why Christian people have, to so large an extent, given up the practice? It is a most fit and proper one and ought to be restored.

I read the other day of a good Bible Christian Brother who sometimes, when his heart was merry within him with joy in the Holy Spirit, would even leap for joy as he went to the pit to work. Why should he not do so? Yet you do not like the look of it, do you? I would a good deal sooner a man should be as nimble as David before the ark than be as sleepy as some Christians are, who, if they have any joy, repress it and never let it out—they are afraid of expressing their joy for fear they should be misjudged. Let it not be so with you! If you let the new life within you have its own

course, you may be thought eccentric, but in those eccentricities will lie your force! Who is he that shall cramp us and hold us in when the eternal Spirit quickens us? If God has blotted out our sins, we will praise and magnify His name! And if we have been delivered from going down into the Pit, we will tell others of it and not hold our tongues!

Even though our testimony may not be delivered in the most classical style and our telling forth of the precious Savior's love may not be all that the educated may wish it to be, yet if we should hold our peace, the stones of the street would cry out and, therefore, we must and we will speak! He that has a well within him bubbling up must let it gush forth— and he that has the new life within him will, in one form or other, become a power in the midst of his fellow men and the secret will ooze out that he is a twice-born man! I cannot linger longer. Regeneration is a thorough change and a wonderful change—but it is a manifest change and in some men it is especially so. Be it our aim to prove to a demonstration that we are born from above!

IV. But now, very briefly, regeneration is a MOST IMPERATIVE change. You must, you must, you must be born again! You may be rich or you may be poor, but "you must be born again." You may be intelligent, you may be educated, you may be talented, but "you must, you must be born again." Many things are desirable, but one thing is necessary, imperatively necessary—you must, you must, you must be born again!

This imperative necessity may be seen from many points of view. We cannot mention them all, but just one or two. If you are not born again, you have no life, no spiritual life. The first birth gave you bodily life and mental life, but it did not give you spiritual life—it could not do so, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh and no more. Now, you must have spiritual life or else you are dead in trespasses and sins and to all that has to do with spiritual blessings—to a spiritual Gospel, a spiritual salvation, a spiritual Heaven—to all these things you are dead as the corpses in their graves are dead to the business of today.

There may be great changes taking place in politics—trade may be very prosperous, or it may be depressed, but the dead man has no interest in the nation or its commerce—how can he have? So is it with you. Until you are born again, the spiritual world is shut to you and you are indifferent to it. Angels may be rejoicing and Believers may be rejoicing over saved souls, but you care nothing about it. The Lord Jesus Himself may be seeing of the travail of His soul, but it is nothing to you and it must be nothing to you because you are dead! Oh if our bodies could take the shape of our souls, there would be many carcasses sitting before me in these pews! Ah, strange and ghastly sight! We thank God that He conceals the spiritual from our eyes, else we might, in horror, leave the places where we sit because we should find ourselves in close companionship with the dead! What a horrible thing a dead soul must be if our spirits could now perceive it as our senses would perceive a corpse!

Let us pause here to realize striking facts in this connection. Some of you are linked in marriage with the spiritually dead. Some of you have dwelling in your house the children of your care who are dead while they live. You will sit to-night at the supper table with the spiritually dead! Regard them in that light and your hearts will, perhaps, be moved to pray more intensely for them than you have ever done. You that sit regularly in this place, I would like you to remember this fact when this house is crowded. Think, "In my pew there are sitting an unconverted man and an unconverted woman—and they are dead." We don't expect them to feel for themselves, but we do expect the

living to feel for them. My dear Hearers who are unrenewed, do you not see that you must be born again, for unless you are so, you will reMal. dead to spiritual things?

Furthermore, remember that a man who is not born again has no spiritual capacity. We must be receivers, first, in the spiritual life, but the dead sinner as yet, until God quickens Him, can receive nothing. How often are the saints of God spiritually comforted, instructed and enriched under the preaching and hearing of the Word of God? But it is their spiritual nature that receives the enrichment. The unregenerate have no spiritual nature— they are carnal, sold under sin—their mental powers, as well as their bodily appetites, are enslaved. Therefore they have no power to receive the blessing. The gracious and ever-blessed rain of the Spirit comes, but they are not like Gideon's fleece ready to drink it in, but like a hard stone upon which the drops may descend but cannot be saturated with the moisture, nor softened by it. Unregenerate men are broken cisterns which it is vain to attempt to fill. Even if God's own Grace were to come to them it could not be retained, for they have not the capacity to hold it.

Only the spiritual can receive the spiritual! You must, then, be born again to have a spirit by which spiritual things are discerned and received. Do you not see that you must be born again? Once more, you must be born again because without the Sprit of God you are not the children of God and, consequently, you have no spiritual inheritance. The Spirit causes us to be born—that birth makes us children and our being children makes us heirs. If we are not born again we are not children, therefore we are not heirs and we are out of the heritage, for God's heritage of Glory is for the heirs of Grace and for none others. And none shall come into the eternal portion but those who are born in His house and are His true sons and daughters. Universal fatherhood, whatever that may be, brings us common mercies, but it is the special fatherhood which God has towards the living in Zion which brings us special blessings!

You must, then, be born again or lose all share in the Divine inheritance. No soul can ever cross the threshold of Heaven that has not received the new life. No matter how abundant its prayers, nor how multiplied its acts of religiousness, unless it has been born again, the gates of Paradise are forever fastened against it. Banished from the Presence of Jehovah's Glory, there is only one other place where it can dwell—and that must be where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched. "You must be born again."

V. I will finish my discourse by saying that this new birth is EMINENTLY PERSONAL. "You must be born again." The idea of proxy is quite apart from the figure of the text. A man is born himself, in propria persona—no other can be born for him—so here the change which must be worked in us must be personally experienced and individually known and felt. What delusion it is to fall back upon a parent's godliness or a godfather's promises, or to imagine that the minister or the so-called priest can stand before God for us! "You"—"you must be born again" and if you are not, you shall never enter the Kingdom of God!

Now, I think I hear passing through the congregation at this moment the whisper of many hearts who are saying, "This is very discouraging. We like to hear, 'Only believe and you shall be saved.' We are glad to be told that, 'whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.' But this distresses us, for it does not open the door as wide as we could wish." Believe me, I am very glad to tell you of the free and wide Gospel of Grace! It is joyful work for me to bring that welcome message to you and I am sure I bring it as constantly as I come upon this platform. My most

frequent note is—"Look unto Christ and be saved all you ends of the earth." But at the same time, God forbid that you should be built up upon a false foundation, or that your faith and confidence should stand apart from the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. It will be found to be wood, hay and stubble if it is so.

But you say my sermon is discouraging—had you not better ask, "Is it true?" A person has been building a house and we see him piling up stones, but he has never dug out a foundation! It is certainly discouraging to him to tell him that it is not the right way to build a house, but it will be a great mercy for him to be discouraged in a work which is so foolish. It will be a great saving to him, in the long run, if all that he has already built should come down at once and he should even now begin at the beginning once more and lay a good foundation and make sure work of it. It would be foolish to cry out, "Do not discourage him!" He ought to be discouraged. Yes, indeed, we would discourage all that will end in disappointment. The fact is, your efforts, your doings and your merits, all of them, at their very best, must be a failure and it is a good thing for us to tell you so.

"But what am I to do?" asks one. That, permit me to remind you, is not the best question for you to ask, for if the work of salvation were what you must do, surely it would be left undone! You may put the question, "What must I do to be saved?" but we will point you away from doing and we will tell you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved. If you persist in saying, "What must I do," we will tell you that the sooner you look away from all that you can do, the better—for the work of salvation from sin is the work of the Spirit of God in you and you must come to look to Him through Jesus Christ that He may work in you all those graces and gifts which shall adorn your future life. Faith looks to the blood of Jesus for the pardon of sin and then looks to Him for His Spirit to overcome the power of sin within the heart—nor does she look in vain—but if you look elsewhere you will search till your eyes fail you and never see your desire.

Would to God we could bring you, not only to discouragement, but to despair of yourselves! When you shall feel you are powerless we shall have hope of you, for then you will leave yourselves in the hands of Him who can do all things! When self's strength is gone, God's strength will come in. "Oh, but you tell me I must have Divine power working in me." We do tell you that—we can tell you nothing less—and if that power is ever at work in your soul, its first effect will be to bring you to confess this and you will fall down before the footstool of Divine Mercy and say, "Lord save me, or I perish. God be merciful to me a sinner." I do not want to rouse your activity, you unconverted people—I want to rouse you to the conviction that you are lost and I pray God the Holy Spirit may so convince you! I wish not to make you think, "we can cure ourselves," but oh that you would feel that you are diseased and that, though you have destroyed yourselves, your remedy lies in a higher hand—that you must look to Jesus, only, for healing!

To get the supernatural element into the matter is that which we would strive for and may God the Holy Spirit help us in it. We would have you look away from what is in you or can come from you and trust to what Christ did on the Cross, to what the gracious Father is waiting, still, to do and what the Holy Spirit is sent on purpose to work in you that you may be saved! Oh that you may begin to pray for the Divine power! May you never rest in anything short of the Divine working in your spirit. It is to this we would bring you!

Now you know all this and have known it for years, the most of you. To know it—ah, how great a privilege if not abused! How great a responsibility if the knowledge shall end here! Yet to know it,

oh how sad unless you feel it! To feel that, "I must be born again," and to be wretched till I am renewed in heart is a good beginning! I pray that you may go home and feel, "There is no pillow in this world that will suit my head till I have laid it upon the Savior's bosom. There is no bliss that can give me solace till I have found pardon in the wounds of my Redeemer." God grant you may sigh and pant in this way and we shall then believe that you are regenerate! May you receive the Lord Jesus and He will give you power to become the sons of God, for those who believe in Him were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God!

Then shall you know the secret of regeneration and the Lord, Himself, shall be revealed in you. Then shall you know that you are blessed of the Lord, for flesh and blood could not have revealed this unto you. May the Holy Spirit be within you evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 3:1-21.

TO MY HEARERS AND READERS AT THE TABERNACLE

AND ELSEWHERE:

BELOVED FRIENDS—By the tender kindness of God, the journey here was made without excessive fatigue and now I trust that genial weather will bring with it rapid restoration. This place has participated in the severe weather which has swept over the Continent, so that I miss, just now, the bright sunshine to which I have been formerly accustomed. Yet it is comparatively warm and so far is beneficial to an invalid. Rest is the main thing and rest I hope to find, that I may come back to you strengthened for sacred service.

It is at the request of many that I write these few lines, otherwise I should be better content to say nothing about myself. Tottering on my staff today in weakness, I hopefully look forward to the time when I shall stand among you in fullness of vigor. God grant that mental and, above all, spiritual strength may be given me for the preaching of the Word in your midst and that my long bodily affliction may assist to that end.

I trust I shall not be forgotten in your prayers when it is well with you. I hope also that the various enterprises such as the College and Orphanage will not be allowed to languish because their President is ill. Peace be to you all. Yours very heartily, C. H. SPURGEON. MENTONE, January, 1879

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Chapter 90

John 3,7 #3121 - The Necessity of Regeneration

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION

NO. 3121

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 29, 1874.

"Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again."

John 3:7.

[See Sermon #130, Volume 3—REGENERATION—

Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, athttp://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WE need not wonder that there are some mysteries in our holy faith, for there are mysteries everywhere. In Nature there are ten thousand things that we cannot understand. In our own bodies there are inexplicable mysteries. He who thinks for only a little while, even of so simple a matter as to how it is that food is gradually turned into flesh, knowing how impossible it would be for us to do it by any chemical process or mechanical apparatus, will see that there is a mystery in every human life—a secret chamber into which the eyes of man cannot look. There are mysteries all around us at this very moment. If we go outside this building, we shall, like Nicodemus, observe that the wind blows. We know it blows, for we hear the sound of it, but as to from where it comes, or where it goes, we know nothing. As there are mysteries in Nature, as there are mysteries in our own bodies, as there are mysteries all around us even in the most commonplace things, it is not remarkable that there should be mysteries in the Kingdom of God!

Yet Christ, by using the metaphor of the wind, shows us that the mystery is a matter of fact and that the mystery can be turned to practical account, for though we do not understand all about the wind, yet we know when it is blowing. And though we cannot comprehend it, we can make use of it. The wind has been employed in a thousand ways in the service of man and it is not necessary that we should understand it in order to make use of it. A man may be an admirable sailor and yet know nothing about the origin of the wind. If he does but understand how to hoist, or shift, or furl his sail, he will do well enough. So is it with the mysteries of the Kingdom of God—although we cannot understand them, the practical use of them is a matter of such simplicity that we shall do well to learn what it is.

I am not going to attempt to explain the mystery of the new birth—that is altogether beyond my powers. I can only explain its results. But there is one point upon which I want to fix your attention and that is that if you are ever to be saved, you must experience this new birth. "Must is for the king," we say, and it was the King of kings who said, "You must be born-again." My text belongs to the absolute necessities—this is a Truth of God that cannot be put aside! "You must be born-again." If you are ever to enter the Kingdom of God, or even to see it—if you are ever to be reconciled to the God whom you have so greatly offended—"You must be born-again."

But what is it to be born-again? I have already said that I cannot tell you how the Spirit of God operates upon the unregenerate, making them to be new creatures in Christ Jesus. I know that He usually operates through the Word—through the proclamation of the Truth of the Gospel. So far as we know, He works upon the mind according to the laws of mind by first illuminating the understanding. He then controls the judgment, influences the will and changes the affections. But over and above all that we can describe there is a marvelous power which He exerts which must remain among the inscrutable mysteries of this finite state, even if we can never comprehend it. By this power such a wondrous effect is produced that a man becomes a new man as much as if he had returned to his native nothingness and had been born-again in an altogether higher sphere! A new nature is created within him, although the old nature is not entirely eradicated. It will ultimately be destroyed, but it is not destroyed at first. Yet a new nature is born within the man, a nature which hates what the old nature loved, and loves what the old nature hated—a new nature which is akin to the Nature of God! That is a wonderful sentence in Peter's second Epistle, "that by these you might be partakers of the Divine Nature." In his first Epistle, he writes concerning "being born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever." This living seed is sown within our hearts and there it begins to grow, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The new birth is the implanting of that living seed within the soul—it is the creation within us of that new, Divine, immortal life. We must have that life or we cannot see or enter the Kingdom of God.

My subject is the imperative necessity of regeneration and I want to show you, first, that the new birth is a great necessity. And, secondly, to ask, have we all experienced it?

I. First, then, I want to show you that THE NEW BIRTH IS A GREAT NECESSITY.

That it is a necessity is quite certain, because it is Jesus Himself who says, "You must be born-again," and Jesus cannot err. Unless we are prepared to reject Him altogether, we must believe Him to be the Infallible Teacher sent from God. Yet He says, "You must be born-again," and you may depend upon it that you must if you are ever to be saved. He was of a gentle, loving spirit. He never bound heavy burdens upon men's shoulders which they were not able to bear. He was so gentle that the little children gathered around His knees and He took them up in His arms and blessed them. I am sure that if He could have said, "You can enter the Kingdom of Heaven without experiencing the new birth," He would have said so. He said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life," because He must speak the Truth of God. In other places, how blessedly has He set the gate of mercy wide open, saying, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." And His last Gospel invitation is, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The words of our text become all the more solemn because they drop from the lips of Him who would not exclude a single soul from everlasting happiness unless the Truth of God required

Him to do so. It is the kinder, gentle, loving Christ who says, "You must be born-again," and so shuts and bars the gate of Heaven against the admission of the unregenerate!

The necessity of regeneration is universal, for Christ addressed this message to a man who was the type of a class of persons who might be exempted from the new birth if any might. Is was Nicodemus, a man who sincerely wished to know the Truth and who was truly desirous to be informed as to the way of salvation. He came to Christ, not with any traitorous design of catching Him in His speech, but keenly desirous to learn what the God-sent Teacher had to tell him. Yet Nicodemus could not enter the Kingdom of God until he was born-again, nor can the most earnest enquirer nor the keenest searcher after the Truth of God! It is an excellent thing to have an honest heart and a candid mind, but Christ says even to such men, "You must be born-again." I delight to meet with honest-minded persons even if they are opposed to the Gospel, for I have often found that their honesty compels them to yield to the claims of the Gospel when it is faithfully set before them. Several of the first followers of Christ were plain, blunt fishermen, honest after their fashion, yet they had to be born-again—it does not matter how good a man may be, or how earnest he may be in seeking to find the Truth of God—he cannot escape from the necessity which applies to the entire human race! "You must be born-again."

Moreover, Nicodemus was a wise man, well taught in the Scriptures. To be a Rabbi required a thorough education in the Old Testament Scriptures and doubtless Nicodemus was equal to the rest of the Sanhedrim to which he belonged. But the study of Scripture, admirable as that is, will not save the soul without the new birth. It is not merely reading about Christ, but having Christ formed in us, the hope of Glory, that will really save us. The Spirit of God has written the Scriptures in this blessed Book but that same Spirit must write those Truths in our heart, or else the Truths will, so far as salvation is concerned, be valueless to us. No amount of knowledge that you can acquire, even a doctor's degree of divinity—no amount of skill in imparting knowledge to others, even though you should be a master in Israel—will enable you to enter Heaven without being born-again!

Moreover, in addition to being a wise man, and a naturally good man, Nicodemus was a very religious man. He was "a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews." The Pharisees were very specially a religious sect— they pushed their observances to the extreme point and all the minutiae of external ritual were carefully attended to by them. They were great

Volume 54 3believers in fasting, in almsgiving, and in oft-repeated prayers. They were the High Churchmen of that period, yet to the most conscientious Pharisees, Christ had to say, "You must be born-again." The Pharisee might be particular as to the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, and the straining out of gnats from the wine that he drank, or he might abstain from it altogether—but all this availed him nothing unless he was born-again! Regeneration is the universal necessity of the entire human family. This text would suit a congregation of kings and princes, peers of the realm and bishops, quite as well as a congregation of vegetable sellers, drunks, harlots and convicts. To all of woman born, this necessity comes without a single exception—"You must be bornagain."

This necessity is evident if we consult the authority of Scripture. Consider its testimony conceiving what man is by nature. The Word of God never flatters us. It tells us that "there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone

out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one." "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the soles of the feet even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Now, if this is your ruined condition, "you must be born-again" if you are ever to enter the Kingdom of God. Mending you, patching you up, revising you, reforming you will be of no avail—you must be new-created, nothing less than that will suffice for you—

"Not all the outward forms on earth, Nor rites that God has given, Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth, Can raise a soul to Heaven. The Sovereign Will of God alone Creates us heirs of Grace— Born in the image of His Son, A new peculiar race."

Remember also what even the Gospel requires of men. Men can hear the Gospel, for they have ears, but they cannot understand it until the Spirit of God opens their minds and hearts to receive it. Unto this day it happens unto men as unto the generation in Christ's day that though they have ears, they hear not, and though we speak unto them, they do not perceive, for how shall the fleshly man receive spiritual things? The unregenerate heart can no more understand the Gospel than a horse can understand astronomy—it is altogether beyond the comprehension of the carnal man! When we use a simple metaphor, he takes it as literally, as Nicodemus did when the Lord said to him, "Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God," and he foolishly asked, "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" When Christ talked to the woman at the well of Sychar about the living water, she said at once, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw." And, today, when Christ says concerning the bread at the communion, "Take, eat, this is My body," the carnally-minded say that the bread is turned into flesh, not having the spiritual discernment to be able to comprehend even the simplest metaphors which the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to use! Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned and, therefore, the carnal mind cannot discern them!

The Graces which appear at the very dawn of the Gospel in the heart are wholly above the reach of man. The Gospel says, "Repent." The unregenerate man loves his sins and will not repent of them. He presses them to his bosom and until his nature is changed, he will never look upon them with abhorrence and sorrow. The Gospel says, "Believe; cast away all confidence in your own merits and believe in Jesus." But the carnal mind is proud and it says, "Why should I believe and be saved by the works of another? I want to do something myself that I may have some of the credit for it, either by good feelings, or good prayers, or good works of some kind." Repentance and faith are distasteful to the unregenerate—they would sooner repeat a thousand formal prayers than shod a solitary tear of true repentance! They would sooner work their way to Heaven even if they had to pass through Hell itself to get there, than come and simply receive salvation for nothing as the gift of God by Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters we must be born-again because the Truth of the Gospel cannot be understood and the commands of the Gospel cannot be obeyed except where the Spirit of God works regeneration in the heart!

As for the privileges of the Gospel, such as communion with Christ, what does the unregenerate man care about that? Access to God, acceptance in the Beloved, adoption into the family of God—he knows nothing about these things and does not want to know about them. Give him prosperity in his business and happiness in his household, and he is perfectly satisfied without the

treasures of the Covenant of Grace, or a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may call him to the Gospel feast, but he will not come, for he sees nothing to come for. You may invite him, as you ought to do, but he will say, "I must go to my farm to try my new yoke of oxen" or, "I must go to my newly-wedded wife, so I pray you have me excused." He will do anything rather than come to the banquet which eternal love has spread because, until he is regenerated, he cannot appreciate the privileges which the Gospel presents to him.

And, Brothers and Sisters, "you must be born-again," because it is impossible for you to ever enter Heaven unregenerate. On earth you cannot have peace with God without the new birth. God will never be reconciled to the flesh. It is a filthy thing which must be put away. The old nature must be dead and buried. The ordinance of Believers' Baptism is meant to teach us that great Truth of God. It is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh that was done by circumcision, but in the New Covenant it is the burial of the flesh altogether! It must be reckoned to be dead and buried with Christ and so be put right away once and for all. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would work this with each one of us! "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." And that which, in our mental

Volume 54 5nature, is called the flesh cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Is must die and be utterly put away as a corrupt thing! We can only enter Heaven through the possession of the heavenly life by virtue of having been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Do you, dear Friends, know experimentally what this mean?

I have to make this further observation, that this necessity is not to be escaped. You may do what you will, my dear Hearer, and I trust you will be in real earnest in seeking the salvation of your soul, but when you have done your best and your utmost, you must be born-again! Were you from this time to give yourself diligently to searching the Scriptures, you must be born-again. Did you ever notice the very strong light in which Christ put that matter of searching the Scriptures? Read aright, the text says, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me: but you will not come unto Me that you might have life." Many a Bible-reader is content with his Biblereading but never comes to Christ! Yet Bible-searching alone will not suffice for salvation, "You must be born-again." If you were to become, from this time, regular in private devotion and constant in attendance upon public ordinances, this declaration would still stand, "You must be born-again." If you are to be saved, you must have a new heart and a right spirit and these you cannot get for yourself. A tree may shoot out a new branch, but it cannot change its nature. "You must be born-again, born from above," so our Savior tells us. There must be worked in you a work which is impossible to you, a work which only God, the Holy Spirit, Himself, can perform, or else you cannot see the face of God with acceptance.

Yes, and in addition to anything that you can do, ministers may do all that they can do for you, but they cannot take you to Heaven, nor make you God's child—you must be born-again. I thank God for any revival that produces any genuine results but just because I rejoice in revivals of the right kind, I tremble as I think of many of the supposed converts who are only converted to self-conceit and other delusions—and not to real faith in Jesus Christ. I charge you, by the living God, everyone of you, not to trust to mere excitement, or fancy as a ground of salvation! You must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus—your very nature must be changed—the whole bent, current and tenor of your life must be altered and that not by human arguments and persuasions, but by the Holy Spirit's power, or else into God's Kingdom you cannot come! All the praying parents,

praying preachers, praying ministers and revivalists in the world cannot save a single soul! It must be born-again and when it is born-again, they do not work the miracle—God may bless their teaching, but the Holy Spirit must have all the praise for it—for He alone works this wondrous change!

Let me also say to you that there is nothing in the world that can stand in the place of your being born-again—

"Could your zeal no respite know,

Could your tears forever flow," this text would still remain true, "You must be born-again." There it stands in front of the gate of Heaven and to every one of you the question is put, "Can you produce the evidences and tokens of the new birth?" If you can, you may enter. But if you cannot, you can in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This necessity is most pressing upon you all. I feel as if I could stand over some of you and weep as I say to you, "You must be born-again." I have told you again and again about judgment to come, but it does not affect you. I have preached to you about Christ's life, death and Resurrection, but it does not move you. In a short time you will be upon your dying beds and no one will be able to help you, then, unless you are born-again! In a little while you will be in eternity—and unless you are born-again, you will be driven from the Presence of God forever into the outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth! O Sirs, "You must be born-again" or you will be damned! "You must be born-again" or you can never stand among the white-robed throngs that hymn the praises of Jesus! By the love we bear to you, we declare that you must be born-again! A mother's tears, a father's prayers, a minister's entreaties all seem to cry to God, "Lord, our children, our hearers must be born-again. Oh, work this great miracle for Your love and mercy's sake!" I should weary you if I kept on harping upon this string, but I do want to get this Truth of God right into your souls. It does not much matter whether you remember what I say or what any other preacher says, for we may err, but our text does not err, it is the Infallible Truth of God— write it in capital letters—YOU MUST BE BORN-AGAIN!

II. Now, secondly, I want very briefly to answer this question, HAVE WE EXPERIENCED THIS NEW BIRTH?

Perhaps somebody says, "Well, I was born-again by baptism. I am told that in my baptism, I was made 'a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.'" Yes, you were told that, but I will ask you one question, were you really made all that by your so-called baptism? I was sprinkled when I was a child, but I know that I was not thereby made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! I know that nothing of the kind took place in me, but that, as soon as I could, I went into sin and continued in it. I was not born-again, I am sure, till I was about 15 years of age, when the Lord brought salvation so my soul through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and so I was enabled so trust in Jesus as my Savior. You say that your prayer book teaches you that you were born-again in baptism but again I ask you, "Were you?" Have you lived like one who has been bornagain? Have you loved Divine things? Have you really been a child of God? Have you really hated sin and put your trust in Christ? If you have, I am not going to deny facts. But when I see myriads of persons who were said to have been born-again in baptism, turn out as bad as drunkards, swearers, adulterers and even murderers who have not been sprinkled, I really cannot put any confidence in such a

"baptism" as that! The fact is, baptismal regeneration [See Sermon #573, Volume 10—BAPTISMAL

Volume 54 7REGENERATION—the Sermon which has had the largest circulation of any in the whole of Mr.

Spurgeon's discourses!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://.] is a lie, a wicked invention of Popery, without the slightest warrant in the Word of God! Not one has ever been born-again in baptism, nor ever can be! Regeneration, in the Scriptures, is always put side by side with faith, as anybody can see who will read the Scripture without prejudice, seeking to know the Truth of God that is there revealed. There is nothing in so called sacraments upon which a soul can rest for salvation. If you have been baptized and even if you have been immersed—which is the only true Baptism—unless the Spirit of God has regenerated you, "You must be born-again, born from above."

Someone asks, "How am I to know whether I have been born-again?" Well, one of the first evidences of regeneration is faith in Jesus Christ, for wherever there is a sincere trust in Jesus Christ, the new birth must have been experienced. This belief was described by Christ as "the work of God." When He was asked, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God," He answered, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." To Nicodemus, Jesus said, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." To the Jews who sought to kill Him, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life." So that faith is the evidence of the possession of that new life which shall last forever—that life which is imparted in regeneration.

Another evidence of the new birth is repentance. Sorrow for sin is one of the sure signs of the new Nature. The new-born Christian hates the sins he loved before and continues to hate them. And the longer he lives, the more he mourns that he ever committed them. His loathing of sin grows with his growth in Divine Grace and sin is never so hateful to a man as when he is most fully sanctified. The nearer we get to Heaven the more ashamed we shall be of ever having been guilty before God.

Sincere prayer is another sure evidence of regeneration. What was said to Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus, as a proof that he was "a chosen vessel" unto the Lord? "Behold, he prays." It was not in a Prayer Meeting that he was praying, but all by himself—and the man who is in the habit of communing with God in secret prayer is a living man, for prayer is the vital breath of the soul. One of the signs that a new-born child is living is a cry—when a man cries to God out of his very soul, you know that he is a living child of the living God.

You may also know whether you are born-again by asking yourself another question—Do you feel a new life within you which you never had before? "Well," says one, "I never experienced any change that I know of. I always was good." Then I am afraid you have formed a wrong estimate of yourself and that you never were what you call, "good." "Well," says the self-righteous man, "I really do not think there was any necessity for any such change as you have been speaking of." Ah, but it is not a question of what you think—what says the text? "You must be born-again." "But," say others, "we had godly parents. We had an excellent example set before us. We were taken, when we were little children, to hear the Word of God and we have been regular attendants upon

the ministry all our days." All that does not alter the fact, "you must be born-again," or else all these privileges will only increase your responsibility! Jesus still says to you, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you," was the answer of the Apostle Peter to those who asked what they must do to so saved. Repentance is necessary in every case— there must be this radical change which shall make you loathe what you once loved and love what you once loathed. I dare not diminish one jot or tittle of the absolute necessity of the case, for I have to answer at the judgment bar of God for what I tell you. If I should flatter you into some vain hope for which there is no solid foundation, you might at the last turn round upon me and say, "You deceived us into the belief that we were saved when we were not!" I will not do that and, therefore, I say to you "You must be born-again."

Do you, then, feel this new life within you? Have you desires that you never used to have? Have you hopes you never had before? Have you fears you never had before? In fact, have you got into a new world where old things have passed away and all things have become new? Do you feel like that woman who said, "Either the world is altogether changed, or else I am"? And is this the result of the change that has taken place in you—you now love God, you now seek to please Him, spiritual things are now realities to you, now the blood of Jesus is your only trust—you now desire to be made holy, even as God is holy? If there is such a new life as that in you, however feeble it may be, though it is only like the life of a new-born child, you are born-again and you may rejoice in that blessed fact!

"Ah," somebody says, "I fear that this kind of preaching will be very discouraging to a great many people." Well, how will it discourage them? "It will discourage them from trying to save themselves." That is the very thing that I want to do! I would like not only to discourage them from attempting that impossible task, but to cast them into despair concerning it! When a man utterly despairs of being able to save himself, it is then that he cries to God to save him—so I believe that we cannot do a man a better turn than to discourage him from ever resting upon anything that he can do towards saving himself!

"Well," says another, "but it is apt to make sinners look within." It is? Have I ever said a word about sinners looking within? I have not said that you are to make yourselves to be born-again, but I have said that "you must be born-again" by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. Surely that does not make sinners look within! It makes them look above to Someone infinitely higher than themselves. The fact is, dear Friends, that the preaching of the necessity of the new birth must be continued because it is true. It is in the Word of God and, as it is there, it is there for a definite purpose and it ought not to be put into the background, or must not be so treated. I believe that wherever there is the work of Grace in the soul, preaching the necessity of the new birth deepens that work. I

Volume 54 9know that a great many profess to come to Christ and I hope that they really do come to Him, although they have never felt what some of us experienced when we were under conviction of sin. Well, if they have come to Christ, it is all right and I am glad. But I am still a believer in the old-fashioned type of conversion and I do not think there are many new births without pangs, or that many souls come to Christ without alarms of conscience and much sorrow of heart on account of sin. When I was converted, sinners used to come to Christ in this way. They

looked by faith at Him whom they had pierced by their sins and mourned for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. I think I have seldom seen a conversion turn out well that had not the foundations of it laid in some measure of abhorrence of sin, loathing of self and utter despair of any salvation except by the Sovereign Grace of God. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" and nothing better, and—"all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away." It is only "the word of the Lord" and the work of the Lord that shall endure forever! Therefore I pray that if there is any work in you at all, it may be God's work and not my work, or the work of any earnest man striving to stir you up, but the real work of God the Holy Spirit from first to last.

If I were in a state of anxiety about my soul and heard such a sermon as this, it would make me feel, "Oh, how dependent I am upon the Spirit of God!" It would compel me to breathe from my inmost soul this prayer, "O Lord, save me!" I think that it would drive me, in despair of doing anything to save myself, to cast myself into the Savior's arms that He might give me of that Spirit by which I should be born-again. And remember that the moment a sinner does that, he is born-again! As soon as ever he casts himself upon Christ, he has passed from death unto life and the miracle of regeneration has been worked in him!

I think, dear Friends, that when we solemnly preach the necessity of regeneration, it has the good effect of overthrowing all that which is false in men and most, if not all of that which comes of humanity, is false. You may grow mushrooms out of almost any filthiness you choose to put down, but the Rose of Sharon needs a different soil from that! You can easily grow men and women who say they are Christians and who are very earnest for a month or two, and then go back to the world again. It is the Holy Spirit alone who creates that life which is everlasting! In the case of those who are mere professors, a very little reproof has the effect of making them go away because they are offended, but it is not so with the true possessors of Divine Grace. That which is of our heavenly Father's planting will never be rooted up, but it will endure all tests that may so applied to it. I know that when I went to see the minister about making a profession of my faith in Christ, I hoped that he would test me, and try me, and probe me, for I wanted him to find me out if I was a hypocrite or self-deceived—and I think that every genuine convert feels very much as I did. We do not want to have any superficial work. We do not want the work to be slurred, we want it to be done thoroughly so that it will last throughout eternity! I do not want to have any peace except it is real peace through the precious blood of Jesus. To cry, "Peace, peace" where there is no peace, is a terrible thing which will be sure to end in overwhelming despair, or else in fatal presumption which is still worse.

I am sure that the preaching of the necessity of regeneration is one of the most effectual ways to injure Satan's cause, for nothing else will avail for the conversion of a big sinner, a ringleader in the devil's army. John Bunyan once said a very strange thing. He said that he had great hopes concerning the generation following his own because the young people in his time were so very wicked. He thought that if they were saved—and he expected that many of them would be—such great sinners as they had been would make great saints. He knew what he had, himself, been, and what the Grace of God had made of him—and that gave him hopes for others. It was an odd way of putting it, but he was right. And if the Lord should take some big sinner here and transform him or her into a saint, what a grand alteration it would make in their homes! Perhaps it would affect a whole parish! I have known some leaders in sin whose conversion has really had a

wonderful influence over the whole countryside where they lived—those who used to be drinking and sporting with them have said to one another, "Have you heard what has come to old Tom?" "No, what's up with him?" "Why, he says that he has been converted! I met him the other day and I said to him, 'What's the latest news?' and he said to me, 'The best news I have ever heard is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.' I can't make out what has happened to him!" Then everybody says, "There is something in that religion which has laid hold of him."

I remember well, in my first pastorate, the time when the biggest drunk in Waterbeach joined the Church. His conversion crowded the place at once! People said, "Well, if that young man's ministry has been a blessing to such an old sinner as that, there is something in it, you may depend upon it!"And they came out of curiosity to hear the Word of God. The best gamekeepers are those who used to be poachers and the best preachers to great sinners are those who were once just such as they themselves are! They know the ins and outs of a sinner's heart and they can talk from experience instead of from theory. When a man has been in the fire and has the smell of it still upon him, he is the one to warn others not to meddle with fire and by means of such sinners, saved by Grace, God shakes Satan's kingdom to its very center and translates sinners from it into the Kingdom of His dear Son! Such conversions as these, like all true conversions, can only be worked by the Holy Spirit.

I pray you all to adore the Holy Spirit, think of Him always with the profoundest reverence. Christian men and women who have been quickened by His power, invoke His might to rest upon you whenever you go about God's work, for without Him you can do nothing! Pray in the Holy Spirit, preach in the Holy Spirit and do not believe in the conversion of a single soul apart from the Spirit of God! Go and preach, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," as fully and as freely as

Volume 54 11 you can, but remember that your preaching cannot, of itself, raise one soul out of its lost estate. This will be your comfort—that the Spirit of God will work with you and through you if you rely upon Him and depend wholly upon Him! I tell you, Sinners, all of you without exception, that if you will come to Jesus Christ and simply trust Him, you shall have salvation and shall have it at once! But my reliance upon any result of my proclamation of the Gospel is not based upon my hope that you will be so well disposed as to come, or upon my confidence that my way of putting the Truth of God will lead you to come to Christ. No! I have not a shadow of reliance, either upon you or upon myself! But I do have this confidence, that if I faithfully preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, He will draw sinners unto Himself and I believe that He will save some out of this congregation, though I know not who they may be. You are like a heap of steel filings and ashes before me—it is no business of mine to separate you. My business is to thrust in the magnet and that will do it! You who will accept Christ as your Savior may have Him—you who will not accept Him must perish in your sin!

But if you do accept Christ, it is because the Spirit of God has led you to do so and has given you the new birth which enables you to do it! If you reject Him, on your own heads be your blood forever. This is a solemn matter. I hope that what I have said will make you think that it is so and that before you go to your beds, you will shake off the idea that this is a very small matter to be attended to whenever you like and to be trifled with as long as you please—but that, instead

thereof, you will each one say, "O God, I see that You alone can save me! You can crush me, or You can save me. I have no claim upon You. If You destroy me, You will be just, yet save me, Lord, for Your dear Son's sake!" Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 91

John 3,8 #1356 - The Heavenly Wind

THE HEAVENLY WIND

NO. 1356

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 27, 1877,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it,

but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes:

so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

John 3:8.

THE Holy Spirit is to be admired, not only for the great Truths of God which He teaches us in Holy Scripture, but also for the wonderful manner in which those Truths are balanced. The Word of God never gives us too much of one thing or too little of another. It never carries a doctrine to an extreme, but tempers it with its corresponding doctrine. Truth seems to run at least in two parallel lines, if not in three, and when the Holy Spirit sets before us one line He wisely points out to us the other. The truth of Divine Sovereignty is qualified by human responsibility and the teaching of abounding Grace is seasoned by a remembrance of unflinching Justice. Scripture gives us, as it were, the acid and the alkali—the rock and the oil which flows from it—the sword which cuts and the balm which heals.

As our Lord sent forth His Evangelists two and two so does He seem to send out His Truths two and two, that each may help the other for the blessing of those who hear them. Now in this most notable third of John you have two Truths of God taught as plainly as if they were written with a sunbeam and taught side by side. The one is the necessity of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the fact that whoever believes in Him is not condemned. This is a vital doctrine, but there is a possibility of preaching it so baldly and so out of relation to the rest of God's Word that men may be led into serious error. Justification by faith is a most precious Truth of God. It is the very pith and heart of the Gospel and yet you can dwell so exclusively upon it that you cause many to forget other important practical and experimental Truths and so do them serious mischief.

Salt is good, but it is not all that a man needs to live upon, and even if people are fed on the best of dry bread and nothing else they do not thrive. Every part of Divine teaching is of practical value and must not be neglected. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, in this chapter, lays equal stress upon the necessity of the new birth or the work of the Holy Spirit and He states it quite as plainly as the other grand Truth of God. See how they blend—"You must be born again," but, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." "Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit,

he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," but, "He that believes on Him is not condemned."

Two great Truths are written in letters of light over the gate of Heaven as the requisites of all who enter there—Reconciliation by the blood of Jesus Christ and Regeneration by the work of the Holy Spirit. We must not put one of these Truths of God before the other, nor allow one to obliterate or hide the other. They are of equal importance, for they are revealed by the same Divine Spirit and are both necessary to eternal salvation. He who cares to preach either of these ought, also, diligently to teach the other, lest he be found guilty of violating that salutary precept, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder."

Avoid all neglect of faith and equally shun all undervaluing of the work of the Holy Spirit and so shall you find that narrow channel in which the way of the Truth of God lies. You must rest in Christ that you may be accepted before God, but the work of the Holy Spirit within you is absolutely necessary that you may be able to have communion with the pure and holy God. Faith gives us the rights of the children of God, but the new birth must be experienced that we may have the nature of children! Of what use would rights be if we had not the capacity to exercise them?

Now, it is of the work of the Spirit of God and of the man in whom the Spirit of God has worked, that I shall speak this morning, according to the tenor of the text. The text may be read two ways. First it may evidently refer to the Holy Spirit Himself. Do you not expect the text to run thus— "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so, also, is the Spirit of God"? Is not that the way in which you, naturally expect the sentence to end? Yes, and I doubt not that such was really the Savior's meaning, but frequently, according to the New Testament idiom, the Truth of God is not stated as our English modes of speech would lead us to expect.

For instance, "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that sowed good seed in his ground." Now the kingdom is not like the man, but like the whole transaction of the parable in which the man is the principal actor. "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls," but the kingdom is not like the man, but the comparison runs into all that the man does. So here the Lord Jesus lays hold of one grand sphere of the Spirit's operations and puts it down, intending, however, a wider sense. There are certain readings of our text which would make this more clear if we could think them allowable, as, for instance, that which does not render the Greek word by, "wind," at all, but translates it "Spirit," and makes it run, "The Spirit blows where He wishes, and you hear the sound of Him." I do not adopt that reading, but there are several great authorities in its favor and this tends to show that our first head is correct.

When we have spoken upon that, we will take the language in its second sense—in reference to the regenerate man—and then we read, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is every man that is born of the Spirit." He himself, like the Spirit of which he is born, is free and is mysterious in his ways, but discerned by the sound of his works and life.

I. Take the text in reference to THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF. The figure is the wind and, as most of you know, the Hebrew word for, "wind," and for, "spirit," is the same. And it is interesting to note that the same is true with the Greek word, "pneuma," which signifies both, "breath," and, "spirit," so that the figure which the Savior used might very naturally grow out of the word which He

employed. The wind is air in motion and is, of course, material. But air is apparently more spiritual than any of the other elements, except fire, since it is not to be grasped by the hand nor seen with the eyes.

It is certain that wind really exists, for we hear the sound of it and observe its various effects, but it is not to be touched, handled, or gazed upon. Men cannot traffic in it, or measure it in scales, or weigh it in balances. We may watch the clouds for hours as they hasten along like winged birds, but the wind which drives them is out of our sight. We observe the waves roused to fury in the tempest, but the breath which so excites them we cannot see. Therefore the word becomes all the more excellent a figure of that mighty power, the Holy Spirit, of whose existence no man ever doubts who has come under His influence, but who, nevertheless, is not to be tracked in His movements, nor to be seen as to His Divine Person. He is mysterious, incomprehensible and Divine.

The metaphor of the wind cannot fully set forth the Holy Spirit, as you know, and, consequently, many other natural figures are employed, such as fire, dew, water, light, oil and so on, in order to exhibit all the phases of His influence. But still, the wind is a most instructive metaphor, as far as it goes, and as we cannot draw forth all its teaching in one sermon, let us be content to keep as closely as we can to the text. First, the wind is a figure of the Holy Spirit in its freeness—"the wind blows where it wishes." We speak of the wind as the very image of freedom. We say to those who would enthrall us, "go bind the winds." As for ourselves, we claim to be "free as the winds which roam at their own will." No one can fetter the wind.

Xerxes threw chains into the Hellespont to bind the sea, but even he was not fool enough to talk of forging fetters for the winds! The breezes are not to be dictated to. Caesar may decree what he pleases, but the wind will blow in his face if he looks that way. The Pope may command the gale to change its course, but it will blow around the Vatican neither less nor more for the "holy father" and the cardinals. A conference of plenipotentiaries from all the powers of Europe may sit for a week and resolve unanimously that the east wind shall not blow for the next six months, but it will take no heed of the arrangement and will cast dust into the counselors' eyes and whistle at their wisdom!

No proclamation nor purpose under Heaven will be able to affect the wind by so much as half a point of the compass. It will blow according to its own sweet will, where it pleases, when it pleases, how it pleases and as it pleases, for "the wind blows where it wishes." So is it, only in a far higher and more emphatic sense, with the Holy Spirit, for He is most free and absolute! You know that the wind is in the hands of God and that He ordains every breeze and each tornado—winds arise and tempests blow by order from the supreme Throne, but as for the Holy Spirit, He is God Himself and absolutely free. He works according to His own will and pleasure among the sons of men. One nation has been visited by the Holy Spirit and not another—who shall tell me why? Why do the heathen lands lie in the dense darkness while on Britain, the Light of God is concentrated? Why has the Reformation taken root in England and among the northern nations of Europe, while in Spain and Italy it has left scarcely a trace? Why blows the Holy Spirit here and not there? Is it not that He does as He wills? "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" is the declaration of the Divine Sovereignty—and the Spirit of God, in His movements, confirms it.

Among the nations where the Spirit of God is at work, how is it that He blesses one man and not another? Why is it that of two men hearing the same sermon and subject to the same influences at home, one is taken and the other left? Two children nursed at the same breast and trained by the same parents grow up to different ends? He who perishes in sin has no one to blame but himself, but he who is saved ascribes it all to Divine Grace—why came that Grace to him and not to the other? We never dare to lay the fault of man's not repenting and believing upon God—that rests with the evil will which refused to obey the Gospel—but we dare not ascribe the saving difference in the case of the one who believes to any natural goodness in himself! We attribute it all to the Grace of God and believe that the Holy Spirit works in such to will and to do according to His own good pleasure.

But why works He in us? Why in any of the chosen? Ah, why? "The wind blows where it wishes." So, too, is it with the blessing which rests upon ministries. One man wins souls to God and, as a joyous reaper, returns with full sheaves. But another who goes forth with strong desires and seems to be as earnest as his fellow, comes home with a scanty handful of ears which he has painfully gleaned. Why is one man's net full of fish and another's utterly empty? One servant of the Lord seems, whenever he stands up to preach the Gospel, to attract men to Jesus as though he had golden chains in his mouth which he did cast about men's hearts to draw them in joyful captivity to his Lord! But another cries in bitterness of soul, "Who has believed our report?" Truly, "the wind blows where it wishes."

Yes, and these changes happen to each man differently. One day the preacher shall be all alive, his spirit shall be stirred within him and he shall speak evidently with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. But tomorrow he shall find himself dull and heavy, even to his own consciousness and even more so to his people's experience, for the power rests not upon him. One day he speaks like the voice of God and another day he is but as a reed shaken of the wind. His fat time of years gone by are devoured by the lean cattle of the present! He has his famine as well as his plenty. You shall see him come forth today with the unction of the Lord upon him and his face shining with the Glory of fellowship with the Most High! And tomorrow he shall say, "Look not upon me, for I am evil," for the glory shall have departed.

We know what it is to come forth like Samson when his locks were shorn and to shake ourselves as at other times and discover that the Lord is not with us. Why all this? Is it not because "the wind blows where it wishes"? The Holy Spirit, for His own wise reasons, puts not forth an equal power upon any man at all times. We cannot control nor command the Spirit of the living God! He is, in the highest sense, a free agent. "Your Free Spirit" is a name which David gave Him and a most appropriate name it is.

Yet, Beloved, do not fall into a misapprehension. The Holy Spirit is absolutely free in His operations, but He is not arbitrary. He does as He wills, but His will is Infallible Wisdom. The wind, though we have no control over it, has a law of its own, but the Holy Spirit is a law unto Himself. He does as He wills, but He wills to do always that which is for the best. Moreover, we know, with regard to the wind, that there are certain places where you will almost always find a breeze—not here, in the teeming city, nor down in the valley shut in by the mountains, nor on yonder steaming marsh! But lift up your eyes to the hills and mark how the breeze courses along the downs and sweeps the summits of the mountain ranges!

In the morning and the evening, when the inland air is hot as an oven, gentle winds come to and from the sea and fan the fishermen's cheeks. You may find places where the air seems always stagnant and men's hearts grow heavy amid the feverish calm, but there are elevated hillsides where life is easy, for the air exhilarates by its perpetual freshness. Brothers and Sisters among lively saints, in the use of the means of Grace, in private prayer, in communion with the Lord, you will find the wind that blows where it wishes always in motion! The wind, too, has, at least in some lands, its times and seasons. We know that at certain times of the year we may expect winds and if they come not to a day or two, yet, as a rule, the month is stormy. And there are, also, trade winds, monsoons which blow with remarkable regularity and are counted upon by mariners.

And so with the Spirit of God. We know that at certain times He visits the Churches and under certain conditions puts forth His power. If, for instance, there is mighty prayer, you may be sure the Spirit of God is at work. If the people of God meet together and besiege the Throne of Grace with cries and tears, the spiritual barometer indicates that the blessed wind is rising. Besides, the Holy Spirit has graciously connected Himself with two things, truth and prayer. Preach the Truth of God, publish the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is the habit of the Holy Spirit to make the Word of God quick and powerful to the hearts of men. If we falsify His Word, if we keep back part of the Truth of God, if we become unfaithful— we cannot expect the Holy Spirit to bless us.

But if our teaching is Christ Crucified, lovingly set forth, and if the Grace of God in its fullness is really declared, the Holy Spirit will attend the Truth and make it the great power of God. I will not say that it is always and without exception so, but I think exceptions must be rare. Almost invariably the Spirit bears witness with the Truth of God in the conversion of men. So, too, with prayer. The Holy Spirit is pleased to connect Himself with that, also, if it is believing prayer. Here the connection is exceedingly intimate because it is the Spirit of God who Himself gives the believing prayer and it is not only true that the Spirit will be given in answer to prayer, but the Spirit is already given or the believing prayer would never have been offered!

The spirit of prayerfulness, the spirit of anxiety for the conversion of men is one of the surest indications that the Holy Spirit is already at work in the minds of His people. Coming back, however, to the great fact that we cannot command the Holy Spirit, what influence ought that Truth of God have upon us? Should it not be just this?—It should lead us to be very tender and jealous in our conduct towards the Holy Spirit so that we do not grieve Him and cause Him to depart from us. Vex not the Spirit! When you enjoy His gracious operations be devoutly grateful and walk humbly before God that you may retain them. And when He is at work, let not negligence on your part cause you to receive the Grace of God in vain.

The wind blew, but the sailor was asleep. It was a favorable breeze but he had cast anchor and his boat moved not. If he had but known it, all through the night he would have spread his sail and have made good headway towards his port. But he slumbered and the blessed wind whistled through the cordage and the ship lay idle at its moorings! Let it not be so with us! Never suffer the Spirit of God to be with us and find us not aware of His Presence. In the olden times, when country people depended more than they do now on the use of windmills to grind their corn, some parishes would be half-starved when, week after week, there had been no wind. The miller would look up anxiously and everybody in the parish would become a watchman for his sails, hoping that they would soon be set in motion.

If the breeze stirred at the dead of night and the miller was sound asleep, somebody or other would run and wake him up. "The wind is blowing, the wind is blowing, grind our corn." So it ought to be whenever the Spirit of God is vigorously working in His Church—we should eagerly avail ourselves of His power! We should be so anxious for His Divine operations that all should be on the watch, so that if some did not discover it, others would, and observant ones would cry, "The Holy Spirit is working with us! Let us arise and labor more abundantly." Hoist sail when the wind is favorable! You cannot command it, therefore carefully value it.

But we must pass on. The Holy Spirit is described as being like the wind as to His manifestations. "You hear," says Jesus, "the sound of it." It has been suggested and some have enlarged upon it, that there are many other manifestations of the presence of wind—you can feel it, you can see its results upon the trees and the waves and sometimes you can be sure that the wind has been at work by the devastation which it has caused. But in this place our Savior was not so much alluding to a great wind as to the gentler breezes. The Greek word, "pneuma," is translated, "breath," and can hardly be made to mean a tempest! It was a gentle wind like a zephyr of which the Lord was here speaking.

The great winds, as I have already said, can be somewhat calculated upon, but if you sit in the garden in the cool of the evening it is utterly impossible for you to tell from where the zephyrs come and where they go. They are so volatile in their movements and untrackable in their course! They are here, there, everywhere—the soft breezes of evening steal among the flowers. Our Lord tells us that such gentle zephyrs are heard. Nicodemus, in the stillness of the night could hear them. "You hear the sound of it." The leaves rustle and that is all. You hear a gentle movement of branch and stem and, as it were, the tinkling of flower-bells, and so you discover that the wind is flitting among the beds and borders.

Now, Beloved, this shows us that the hearing ear is intended, by God, to be the discerner of the Spirit to men—to the most of men the only discerner that they have. "You hear the sound of it." What a wonderful dignity the Lord has been pleased to put upon this little organ, the ear! The Romish Church gives the preference always to the eyes. Her priests are always for astonishing men into grace with their wonderful "performances"! But God's way is, "Faith comes by hearing," and the first detector of the Holy Spirit is the ear. To some men this is the only revealer of His mysterious Presence, as I have already said—they hear the sound of it, that is to say, they hear the Gospel preached—they hear the Word of God read.

Truth, when it is couched in Words of God, is the rustling of the holy wind, it is the footstep of the Eternal Spirit as He mysteriously passes along a congregation. Oh, what grief it is that some never get any further than this, but abide where Nicodemus was at the first—they hear the sound and nothing more. Some of you are now daily hearing the Truth of God which has saved thousands, but it does not save you! You are hearing the very Truth of God which peoples Heaven, but yet it leaves you without a hope of eternal life! Yet be you sure of this, the Kingdom of God has come near you. "You hear the sound of it," and that wind whose whispers you hear is not far off your own cheeks. When you hear the rustling among the branches of the trees, the breezes are not far to seek, nor is the Spirit of God far away when His sound is heard.

Some hearers, however, go further, for they hear the sound of the Spirit in their consciences and it disturbs them. They would sleep as others do, but as the wind sometimes comes whistling through

the keyhole or howls down the chimney and wakes the sluggard, or if the man is lying in a garden, asleep, the breezes play around his ears and face and startle him, so it is with many unconverted people! They cannot be quiet, for they hear the sound of the Holy Spirit in their consciences and are troubled and perplexed. There is a revival and they are not saved, but they are startled and alarmed by it. Their sister is converted, they are not, but still it comes very near them and they feel as if an arrow had gone whizzing by their own ear. It is hard living in a careless state in the midst of revival. "You hear the sound of it."

But some of you, in your conscience, are hearing the sound, now, in your family circle, from the fact that one after another of your relatives have been brought to know the Lord. You cannot avoid feeling that there is something powerful abroad, though it has not yet exerted its regenerating power upon you. As for the man who is saved, he hears the Holy Spirit in the most emphatic sense and with what variety that sound comes to him! At first he heard it as a threatening wind which bowed him in sadness and seemed to sweep all his hopes to the ground, as the sere leaves of the forest are carried in the autumn's wind.

When the Spirit's voice sounded in my ears at the first it was as a wail of woe, as a wind among the tombs, as a sigh among faded lilies! It seemed as if all my hopes were puffed away like smoke, or as the night mists in the morning breeze. Nothing was left for me but to mourn my nothingness. Then I heard a sound as of the hot south wind of the East, as if it issued from a burning oven. You know the text, "The grass withers and the flower thereof fades away, because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the peoples are grass." In my soul there had bloomed a fair meadow of golden kingcups and fair flowers of many dainty colors, but the Spirit of God blew on them and withered them all and left a dry, brown, rusty plain where there was neither life nor comeliness.

So far the sacred wind destroys that which is evil, but it ends not there, for we thank God we have heard the sound of the Spirit as a quickening wind. The Prophet cried, "Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live," and the Wind came and the dead arose an exceedingly great army! The same miracle has been worked on us. The sere bones of our own death have crept together, bone unto his bone, and flesh has come upon them and now, because of the Divine Breath, we have begun to live! Now, also, when the Holy Spirit visits us, He renews our life and energy and gives us life more abundantly.

The Holy Spirit has, since then, been to us full often a melting wind, "He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow." Locked up in the chains of ice all through the winter, the waters are still as a stone, but the spring winds come, the brooks find liberty and leap away to the rivers! And the rivers flow in all their free force to add their volume to the sea! So has the Spirit of God oftentimes broken up our frost and given our spirits joyous liberty. He melts the rocky heart and dissolves the iron spirit—at the sound of His goings men are moved to feeling. We know the sound of this wind, also, as a diffusive breath, drawing forth and diffusing our slumbering graces. "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

Oh, what a sweet freeing of holy gratitude, love, hope and joy has there been in our heart when the Spirit of God has visited us! As sweet essences lie hidden in the flowers and come not forth until the loving wind does entice them to fly abroad and so do sweet Graces lie within renewed spirits until the Holy Spirit comes and speaks to them! And they know His voice and come forth to meet Him and sweet fragrances are shed abroad. Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, all this we know!

And we have heard the sound of the Holy Spirit in another sense, namely, as going forth with us to the battle of the Lord. We have heard that sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees which David heard and, by God's Grace, we have bestirred ourselves and victory has been ours!

If we have not heard that rushing mighty wind which came at Pentecost, yet have we felt its Divine effect, which ceases not, but still brings life, power, energy and all that is needed for the conversion of the sons of men to us who are bid to go forth and preach the Gospel among the nations. In all these respects the Holy Spirit has manifested Himself, as wind does, by His sound. "You hear the sound of it." "Their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world."

A third likeness of the Spirit to the wind is set before us in the point of mystery. "You cannot tell from where it comes nor where it goes." Of the wind we may tell that it comes from such-and-such a quarter or point, but you cannot put your finger on the map and say, "The north wind began in this region," or, "here the west wind was born." Indeed, we know very little about the winds—their origin or their laws. One of the best and most accurate observers of the wind during 30 years, recorded every wind in his regions until, at the end of the term, he abandoned the few rules which he had laid down during the first two or three years, for he found that no rule held good. No man can say from where the wind leaps forth.

The heathen dreamed of a certain cave where the winds were enclosed as in a prison and suffered to go abroad one by one—it was but a fable. We know not where the winds first spread their wings, or where they sleep when all is still. So is it with the Holy Spirit in the mind of man. His first movements are hidden in mystery. You know that you are converted, my dear Friend, and you know somewhere about the time. And you probably remember somewhat as to the means which the Lord used for your salvation. Those outward circumstances you know, but how the Holy Spirit operated upon you, you do not and cannot tell any more than you can tell how the life swells within the seed until it springs up and becomes the full corn in the ear, or how the sap in the trees first descends in the winter and afterwards climbs, again, in the spring.

There are secrets which Nature does not reveal—the work of the Spirit is even more a secret—and no man can explain it to his fellow or to himself. Why is it, my Friend, that you obtained a blessing under one sermon but not under another? And why, when you spoke to your sister, was she more blessed under the second than the first? The power does not come from the preacher, then, it is clear—and "you cannot tell from where it comes." There are times in which you feel not only that you can pray but that you must pray—how do you come to be in that state?

I know what it is to feel a very ecstasy of delight in the Lord, for which I can scarcely account. And, at another time, when I have been engaged in the same work and I think with the same earnestness, I have not been conscious of any such delight in God! At one time the heart will be full of penitence as if it would break because of sin. At another season it will overflow with such delight in Christ that the sin seems almost forgotten in the pardoning Sacrifice. Why these various operations? We know what it is, at times, to feel such a sense of death upon us as to be earnestly preparing for our last hours. At another time we seem to be altogether forgetful of death and to be living, as it were, the immortal life already, raised up together and made to sit together with Christ!

But how these various modes and forms and workings of the Spirit come, who among us shall tell? Go trace the dewdrops, if you can, to the womb of the morning, and discover which way the lightning flashes went, or how the thunder rolled along the mountain tops! But you cannot tell nor can you guess from where comes the Spirit of God into your souls! Nor can we tell where He goes. Here, again, is another mystery. Oh, it charms me to think that when we let loose the Truth of God in the power of the Spirit we never know where it will fly! A child takes a seed, one of those little downy seeds which has its own parachute to bear it through the air. The little one blows it into the air, but who knows where that downy seed shall settle and in whose garden it shall grow?

Such is the Truth of God, even from the mouths of babes and sucklings. Whole continents have been covered with strange flowers simply by the wind blowing foreign seeds there! Mariners have discovered sunny islets out there in the Southern Sea where foot of man has never trod, yet covered with abundance of vegetation which the wind has, by degrees, blown there! Scatter the Truth of God on all sides, for you cannot tell where the Spirit will carry it! Fling it to the winds and you shall find it after many days. Scatter the living Seed with both hands—send it north, south, east, and west—and God will give it wings!—

"Float, float you winds the Story, And you, you waters roll, Till like a sea of Glory It spreads from pole to pole."

I had a letter but the other day when I was sorely sick. It was written by a Sister in Christ in the very heart of the empire of Brazil. She said that she had met with a copy of my, "Morning Readings," and had found, thereby, the way of peace and, therefore, she wrote me such a loving, touching letter that, as I read it, it brought tears to my eyes. There was something more affecting yet, for at the end was written in another hand, some words to the effect that his dear wife who had written the above letter had died soon after finishing it, and with a bleeding heart the lone husband sent it on to me, rejoicing that the Word of God came to his wife's soul in the far-off land.

Brethren, you do not know where the Word will go and the Spirit with it! In Bohemia the papists thought they had stamped out the Gospel and with cruel edicts they kept down all thought of Protestantism. But just lately, since the Toleration, the Gospel has been preached in that country and, to the surprise of everybody there, men and women have come forward from lone cottages in the woods and from different corners of the great cities of Bohemia, bringing with them ancient copies of the Word of God, themselves being eager to know the precious Truths of God for which they remember that their fathers died!

A Truth of God will go down the centuries—like the river, it sings—

"Men may come and men may go, But I go on forever."

"You can not tell where it goes," it will travel on till the millennium! Send that saying abroad that the Truth of God cannot die! The persecutor cannot kill it, it is immortal like the God who sent it forth! The persecutor cannot even stay its course! It is Divine! Popery will always be in danger so long as there is one leaf of the Bible upon earth, or one man living who knows the Savior! Antichrist cannot triumph! The Holy Spirit wars against it with the sword of the Word of God and you cannot tell how far into the heart of error any Truth may be driven. To the overthrow of falsehood and the death of sin, the Spirit speeds on, but you know not how. "You cannot tell where it goes."

If you have received the Holy Spirit into your heart, you cannot tell where He will carry you. I am sure that William Carey, when he gave his young heart to Christ, never thought the Spirit of God would carry him to Serampore to preach the Gospel to the Hindus! And when George Whitefield first drank of the life-giving Spirit, it never occurred to him that the pot-boy at the Bell Inn at Gloucester would thunder the Gospel over two continents and turn thousands to Christ! You know not to what blessed end this Wind will take you!

Commit yourselves to it—be not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Be ready to be borne along as the Spirit of God shall help you, even as the dust in the summer's breeze. And O child of God, you do not know to what heights of holiness and degrees of knowledge and ecstasies of enjoyment the Spirit of God will bear you. "Eye has not seen nor ear heard the things which God has prepared for them that love Him," and though He has revealed them by His Spirit (for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God), yet even to the best taught child of God it is not yet known, to the fullest, where the Spirit of God goes.

"Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength," and He will bear you onward and upward, even to perfection, itself, and you shall be with Jesus, where He is, and behold His Glory!

II. I have but a few minutes left for my second head, but I do not need many, since I do not wish to say much upon it. The text relates TO THOSE WHO ARE BORN OF THE SPIRIT. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." The birth partakes of the nature of the parent. That which is born of the Spirit is like unto the Spirit of which it is born, even as that which is born of the flesh is flesh and is similar to the flesh by which it is begotten.

The twice-born man is like the Holy Spirit who produced him, and he is like He in each of the points which we have already dwelt upon. As to freedom, you may say of him, "He blows where he wishes." The Spirit of God makes the Believer a free man, bestows on him the freedom of his will which he never had before. He gives him a delightful consciousness of liberty. "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free, indeed." I do not affirm that every spiritual man does as he wishes, because, alas, I see another law in our members warring against the law of our mind and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death. But still, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Now you can pray, which you could not do before. Now you can praise, though before you could not extract a note of praise from your ungrateful heart. Now you can cry, "Abba, Father." Now you can draw near to God. You are no longer under man's control, you go where you wish. You are not now ruled by priestcraft, nor domineered over by the opinion of your fellow man. The Lord has set you free and you wish to go where God's Word bids you go. And you find the utmost liberty in going that way. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I cannot tell you the change which is felt by a regenerate man in the matter of spiritual liberty! When you were under the bondage of the law of custom and of sin, and of fear of death and dread of Hell, you were like a man shut up in one of those cells in Venice which lie below the level of the water mark, where the air is foul and the poor prisoner can only stir half-a-dozen feet and then walk back again in the darkness.

But when the Spirit of God comes, He brings the soul from darkness into light, from clammy damp into the open air! He sets before you an open door. He helps you to run in the ways of God's commands and, as if that were not enough, He even lends you wings and bids you mount as the eagle, for He has set you free! Again, the man who is born of the Spirit is somewhat manifested and is known by his sound. "You hear the sound of it." The most ungodly man, if he lives near a Christian, will hear the sound of him. The secret life within will speak words, for Christians are not dumb. But actions will speak more loudly, still! And even apart from actions, the very spirit and tone of the man who is really regenerated will speak and the ungodly man will be compelled to hear it. "You hear the sound of it."

And now notice the mystery there is about a Christian. You know nothing, if you are unregenerate, about the life the Believer leads, for he is dead and his life is hid with Christ in God. You know not from where he comes forth in the morning—those beds of spices which have made his garments fragrant, you have not seen. That weeping in prayer or that rejoicing in fellowship with which he opened the morning you know nothing of—and you cannot know until you are, yourself—born of the Spirit! Neither can you tell where the spiritual man goes. In the midst of his trouble you see him calm. Do you know where he went to win that rare quietude? In the hour of death you see him triumphant! Do you know where he has been to learn to die so joyously?

No, the unregenerate man knows not where the Believer goes. There is a secret place of the Most High and they shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty who have once learned to enter there, but carnal men come not into this secret chamber. The Christian life is a mystery all through, from its beginning to its end. To the worldling it is all a mystery and, to the Christian, himself, a puzzle. He cannot read his own riddle, nor understand himself. This one thing he knows, "Whereas I was once blind, now I see." This, also, he knows, "O Lord, I am Your servant! I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds." This, also, he knows, that when his Lord shall be revealed, then will he, also, shine forth as the sun!

The Life within him, in its coming and going, is all a mystery to him, but he blesses God that he has fellowship in it. He goes on his way feeling that though men know not from where he is, nor where he is going, yet the Lord knows him, and he, himself is sure that he is going to his Father and his God! O that every one of you had so delightful a hope! The Lord grant it to you, for Jesus' sake.

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John 3,8 #2067 - The Spirit and the Wind

THE SPIRIT AND THE WIND

NO. 2067

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 2, 1888.

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it but cannot tell

from where it comes and where it goes. So is

everyone that is born of the Spirit."

John 3:8.

OUR Savior's words are infinite. Some men use a great deal of language to convey a very little meaning. But our Savior compacts boundless instruction into short sentences. If all the preachers in Christendom were to preach from this one verse for the next twelve months they would still leave much of its teaching undeveloped.

These words remind us of the Holy Spirit. Is it not to be feared that we have lost a great deal of power in our lives because we have not been sufficiently mindful of the power of the Spirit of God? When our Savior compared the Holy Spirit's operations to the movements of the winds did He not show us how absolutely needful they are, how indispensable they are? Imagine a world without winds! Why, we should soon stagnate into death. Without wind what would be the use of the great highway of the sea? A thousand mischiefs would follow—infinitely more than we could calculate—if henceforth the air had no motion and there were no living, breathing winds.

Without the Spirit of God, the scene were infinitely worse. O ship of the Church, how could you speed over the sea of time? The trees of the forest would no more clap their hands. Stagnation of progress would take place. The dry bones of the valley would lie unquickened and even the odors of the rose of Sharon would no more be shed abroad. We must have the Spirit of God. Even as the Sun of Righteousness brings healing beneath His wings so does the Holy Spirit bring all that is living to us all. Let us adore the third Person of the Trinity in Unity and think of Him often, with deep reverence in our spirits, so that we never go to work, nor to prayer, nor even to the singing of a hymn without seeking that He would Himself be the life of the holy engagement.

With the view of bringing out the Truth about the Spirit of God, I shall first mention certain minor lessons contained in the text. Then, the lesson of the mystery of the Holy Spirit. And thirdly, the mystery of the man that is born of the Spirit. For it is not merely said, "so is the work of the Spirit." But "so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." The child of a mystery is himself a mystery.

I. First, there are CERTAIN MINOR LESSONS TO BE TAUGHT HERE. The Spirit of God is like the wind. Note well that His operation is unexpected. The wind blows where it wishes so that you know not what wind to expect. In this land, especially, we can never tell what wind will blow tomorrow. A few days ago it was the south-west and it brought a rapid thaw. But the next morning it was nearly north and a frost was upon us. We may well put vanes upon our public buildings, for without them we could never tell from the day of the year or the season of the year, from what quarter the wind would come. I feel thankful when I remember that, like the wind, the Holy Spirit blows where He wishes for I cannot tell where next He may operate.

Perhaps tomorrow He may save a prince—it would be an unexpected thing. Another day He may save some great backslider, who knows? He may graciously work upon the more degraded part of the people or He may deal with certain of our great merchants and bring them to His feet. He that knows the work of the Holy Spirit must have learned to expect the unexpected. The last thing expected in Jerusalem was that Saul of Tarsus would be converted. But he was converted. And you may now hope that the most violent opposer of the Gospel may become a trophy of its power. And might not that same wind blow on you who come here simply to be a spectator of solemnities—willing to hear what the preacher has to say but not at all desirous to be affected by it?

How often have we seen men and women the least likely, the very first to be impressed by this Divine power? O heavenly Wind blow where the feeble faith of Your people has scarcely dared to think that You can come, and where every influence has operated to shut You out! The movement of the Holy Spirit is like the wind, too, because it is inexplicable. Who can tell me why the wind was north-west on Monday, or why it was east on Friday? There are persons who profess to tell us but they use great words which mean nothing. As a general rule, science signifies bamboozlement, riding upon hypotheses, or mystifying with long words.

The explanations of modern savants are often more difficult to understand than the fact which requires the explanation. Now I cannot tell why the Spirit of God works here or there. Why was England favored with the Gospel when other nations, who were in advance of Britain in civilization, were left without it? Why is it that the islands of the sea seem almost always to accept the Gospel, while continents are left in darkness? "He gives no account of His matters"—take that for your answer. It is all that He will give you.

The Holy Spirit moves like the wind for suddenness and freeness. None of us can raise the wind. We use the expression, but the fact is beyond our power. The wind comes without our call or direction. Who shall tell whether tomorrow we shall wake up with a thaw or a sharp frost? The wind springs up just where it likes and moves just where it pleases. And it is so with the Holy Spirit. I grant you that prayer such as that of Elijah can chain the winds and stay the clouds, or unseal the bottles of Heaven and bring down the rain—but it is because the Lord wills it. Still, the Spirit is absolutely free and He moves as the dew which tarries not for men, neither waits for the sons of men.

If He wills to break forth tomorrow across this country with His Divine energy He cannot be stopped. If, in answer to the prayers of His people, He should be pleased to work in India or in China, as I trust He will, we shall soon see how free is the blessed Spirit to bring glory to God. God may be glorified thereby. The Spirit is like the wind—His movements are not to be accounted for.

And, next, the Holy Spirit is like the wind because He is absolutely sovereign. Preachers scarcely like to tell their congregations nowadays that God gives His Grace according to His own good pleasure. I learned, when I was a boy, that the chief end of man was to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. But I hear now, according to the new theology, that the chief end of God is to glorify man and enjoy him forever. Yet this is the turning of things upside down. The glory of God is still the chief end of the world's existence. And whether men will have it so or not, the Lord has settled it. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

So that, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs but of God that shows mercy." No voice is more glad than mine to preach the free salvation of God to them that perish. But God has not sunk His sovereignty in His bounty. Jehovah still reigns and the wind blows where it wishes and not where man wills that it shall blow. Further, the Spirit of God is comparable to the wind because of the variety of His operations.

The wind does not blow at all times alike. Soft and mild, it brings us summer heat. Rough and rugged, it makes us bind our cloaks about us as the sharp breath of winter chills us to the bone. The Spirit of God works differently at different times, according to the necessity of the case and according to His own will. For He blows as He wishes as well as where He wishes. Sometimes I have almost trembled to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. I remember a Brother praying that we might be filled with the Spirit of God and I was but very young then but ventured to ask him whether he knew what he meant.

He looked at me with astonishment when I added, "Where He comes He is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning." It is a blessing, no doubt, to be filled with the Spirit. But who may abide the day of His coming? Like the Lord Jesus, He is as a refiner's fire. We might have had the Spirit much more copiously had we been able to bear His wondrous work within us. I know He is a Comforter but I know also that His fan is in His hand. He is a searcher as well as a healer, a destroyer of evil as well as a creator of good.

Thus you see that His working is not always of one kind. One gracious soul has gone out weeping, broken-hearted—the Spirit of God had wounded the heart. Another has gone forth rejoicing in full salvation—it was the Spirit of God. One day the Word of God comes like a hammer and a fire—at another time it drops like the gentle dew from Heaven upon the parched heart. All these are works of the same Spirit. Judge not, I pray you, so as to deny this humble hope or that trembling trust to be of the Spirit, for the Spirit works all good things.

Even in the same individual the Spirit of God works very differently at different times. One day He makes us leap like young harts upon the mountains. And then Napthali is a hind let loose—the Spirit of God is on him. At another time the true Prophet is shut up and cannot come forth. He is filled with sighs and groans which cannot be uttered and the Word of the Lord is as a pent-up fire in his bones. But the Spirit of God is as much in the silence as in the eloquence—possibly more so—for the flesh may go with the first but it is the Spirit which works in the second.

Let us not judge ourselves to be abandoned by the Spirit of God because after autumn eventides, in which we sat under our own vine and fig tree, we have had wintry nights of darkness, leafless and fruitless. Don't you know that the Spirit of God is that Wind which passes over the green field

when the flowers are all in bloom and the grass withers and the flower fades because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it? Surely the people are grass. The withering work of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for our eternal benefit as when the Spirit, at another time, opens the buds of those fair flowers which shed their perfume at the feet of love.

Note then, that like the wind, He varies in His modes of manifestation. And note, again, the Spirit of God is like the wind because His operation is manifest. "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound thereof." Yes, we cannot see the wind but we can hear it. So may you hear the Spirit of God. When you hear the Scriptures and read the Word, the Spirit of God speaks to you. It is well to hear the Spirit whisper in the ear of conscience when He presses home the Truths of God and makes the mind to feel its power. Sweetest of all is it when the newly-opened ear hears the Spirit of God speak to it with its own peculiar, "still small voice." Then it is sweetly true. "You hear the sound thereof."

My dear Hearers, do you know anything about this? Has the Spirit of God so worked in you that you have recognized the sound? It is a manifest work—have you felt it?

In all respects, the work of the Spirit of God remains mysterious and wonderful. Men cannot tell us much about the wind but when the wind rises to a tornado and carries everything before it, we see what the wind can do. I would to God that we had a cyclone of the Holy Spirit! What a sweep it would make of a great many rotten Church buildings which now stand upright! Many a magnificent pile would fly before it like dust and chaff from the summer's threshing-floor! But the Spirit of God, whether He works so gently that He scarcely disturbs the tear that hangs in the eye like a dewdrop on a blade of grass, or whether He comes with such tremendous force that the most stubborn infidelity is swept away before it—in either case it is very marvelous—for He is God and He works after the Divine manner.

I am half inclined to pause here and say, "For the rest of our time let us worship in the presence of this mighty God, who does His pleasure and works the will of the Most High forevermore."

II. But I must take you on—in the second place to consider THE GREAT LESSON OF THE MYSTERY WHICH IS TAUGHT US BY THE SYMBOL OF THE WIND, WHICH IS THE TYPE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

Now dear Friends, concerning the wind, our Savior says, "You can not tell from where it comes and where it goes." Yet we know that it comes from the east, or the south and passes on its way and it goes towards the west. The text cannot mean that we do not know the direction of the wind, or the direction in which the Spirit of God is moving, for we do know that. We know that He is a power that makes for righteousness and for eternal life. But then, we do not know where any wind begins to blow. No one can explain where the north wind commences.

The heathen had an idea about the wind rushing out of a cave, or of its being let loose from a bag. We know that this is but a dream. We cannot imagine a place where the wind starts on its journey. And we do not know when the Spirit of God begins to work in any person's heart, or even in our own. Some persons are troubled because they cannot tell the day of their conversion. Let them not be troubled about that question. Even those who know that on such-and-such a day they took a decided step, and the light burst in upon their spirit, will find, if they look back, that a great deal of gracious experience went before their decision to prepare their minds for the final step.

We do not know how early the Divine processes begin within a soul. Our very parentage has something to do with it. That we were born of such-and-such godly parents is a part of the arrangement of Divine Grace. I do not think you can tell, with regard to yourself, when the first gracious thought was sown in you when first you lived towards God. You can tell when you first perceived that you believed in God. But there was an experience before that. You cannot put your finger upon such-and-such a place and say, "Here the east wind began," nor can you say, "Here the Spirit of God began to work on me."

Neither can we always tell what was the first process. Does a man pray first or believe first? If he prays without faith he will not be heard. Which comes first, repentance or faith? A repentance that has no faith in it is no repentance. A faith that has no repentance with it is no faith. These gracious products are like the spokes of a wheel, they all move at the same time. When the wheel of spiritual life moves we cannot tell which grace in it moves first. The processes of Divine Grace may, in your case, begin with a downcast soul and in the case of another person they may begin with a lifting up of holy faith. We cannot tell from where it comes.

Neither can we always tell the exact means of our receiving the Spirit. You say it was by this minister's preaching. Be grateful. But before that sermon an unknown person did a deal of plowing within your heart. How would the one have sown had not the other plowed? Many a man who thinks he has never done any good will find out at the Last Great Day that he did much more than he fancied and that he accomplished an essential part of the work though it remained hidden. "You can not tell from where it comes."

Equally mysterious is the other point as to "where it goes." We know which way the Holy Spirit points but you can not tell where He goes—that is to say what special fashion His work will take in the person who has received it tonight—whether it shall go towards a deeper and deeper sense of sin and the life shall be most noticeable for its repentance. Or whether it shall rise into a higher and a higher view of Christ and the life shall be noticeable for its joyfulness. You can not tell where it goes. How far the Grace of God can go in any man is impossible for us to say. Let none of us begin to measure by ourselves and say, "Nobody can be holier than I am. Nobody can have more Divine Grace than I have."

Brothers and Sisters, you yourself can obtain ten times as much Divine Grace as you now have. You are but a babe yet. You do not know what the stature of a man in Christ may be. The boy converted but a week ago may become a Moffat or a Livingstone. The girl who is now a trembling Believer, you can not tell what a Mary or Hannah, God may make her. You can not tell where the Spirit goes. When Martin Luther's father first taught Martin about Christ and prayed for him, he could not tell how the Spirit of God in him would work and how the whole world would be the better for the miner's son. "You can not tell where it goes."

Oh, if some of you get the Spirit of God just now, I cannot guess what it will make of you! There are wonderful possibilities sleeping within the breast of every man who receives the Spirit of God. Should the Spirit work in you, you would not know yourself in the sanctifying experience of a thousand years time. And what are a thousand years? Project yourselves beyond the growths of time to that grandest of all growths, when "we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." Even then you have not reached the end of the Divine way. You can not tell where it goes.

You are yet to outstrip the angels. Jesus your Lord is the First-born and you are to be one of the First-born's many Brethren. Measureless advancement lies before you. I have opened the window—look through and contemplate with the eye of faith what yet may come of the entrance of the Grace of God into your heart! You can not tell where the north wind stays its course, nor where the east wind falls asleep. Is there such a place? You have not seen where it begins, nor can you guess where it shall end, yet even when you are in Glory the life which the Spirit imparted to you here shall be your life.

III. The last few minutes must be occupied with THE LESSON CONCERNING THE MYSTERY OF THE MAN HIMSELF—"So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

The Spirit-born man is a mysterious person. Only those who are like he is can pretend to know him. Even they do not know him. And what is more wonderful—he does not know himself. Perhaps no man is more amazed at him than the godly man himself. He has experienced a change but he cannot describe it to you. He knows the things in which he is changed—the effects of the Spirit—but how it was worked he knows not.

As no man can tell anything about his first birth, so neither can he describe his second birth—it remains a mysterious operation even to him who has passed through it. "Oh," said one to me, "Sir, either the world's quite altered, or else I am." So, indeed, it is—everything is changed. The world itself is altered and in some things it seems altered for the worse. We find we are not at home in it, though we used to be. We should not know ourselves if we met ourselves. And when, unfortunately, we do meet ourselves, we fall to quarrelling with ourselves—for we have no greater enemy anywhere than our own selves.

It is a strange thing that we should have to say so—but the greatest paradox that can be is a regenerate man still in a body which remains under corruption. The man is a strange mixture of old and new, nature and Grace. While he is himself a mystery to himself, his sorrows are a mystery to other people and they cannot make out why he is sad. His business prospers, his children are about him, he has good health and yet he is mourning. And if they hear him say, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They reply, "This is a wretched man, though he ought to be the happiest of beings!"

From the best man in the world we hear the deepest sigh that he is not better. The man that thanks God who can give him the victory is the man who groans in the battle. The world does not understand this. It cannot make out how we can fight and yet be at peace. How we can be torn asunder, yet never torn away from the Cross. How we can live by dying and die every day in order that we may never die at all. The Believer's riddle is a very hard one. He is a mystery as to his sorrows and his joys— these are secrets with which the world cannot intermeddle. This is a mysterious business—a man in poverty, rich. A man in affliction, rejoicing. A man alone, yet in the best of company. The unregenerate cannot comprehend this singular person.

The man that lives near to God is a mystery, more or less, at all times. He is not all he desires to be, nor all he hopes to be but he is far beyond what he ever expected to be. Strange impulses move him at times so that he does things which he cannot himself account for. He feels that he is bound to do them, and he does them, and has the warrant of having done rightly in the result of what he does. I am sure that every child of God who walks in the light of His countenance will

understand what I mean when I say that we are moved in singular ways. So moved that we ourselves hardly know how. But so moved that Wisdom is justified of all her children.

Strange is the power of the Holy Spirit over the heart of the regenerate. And this is made manifest in the singular changes of which they are the subjects. God's own people know what it is to sound the deeps and outsoar the heights. Up, up, up, where the callow lightning first spread his wings, we mount in ecstasy. And then down we go, down into the abysses where sea-monsters have their dens—such strange beings are we when under the highest power. The wind sighing through the trees, or singing amid the cords of an Aeolian harp is not more strange than the experience of a genuine child of God.

I know what it is to run before Ahab's chariot with Elijah and I am afraid I know what it is to faint under the juniper and need to be awakened that I may partake of food, that I may go forty days in the strength thereof. The Christian man does not understand himself but his varying experiences go to make up that sickness of self and fondness of Christ which is so desirable.

I will give you two words you cannot explain, just to show the mystery of our manhood. "Spirituality"—now then, turn to your dictionaries and see whether they define it. You know what it is—you cannot tell me and I shall not tell you, because I cannot. There is another word—"unction." You know what it is. If you hear a sermon that has none of it you know what the absence of it is. But when an unction rests upon the Word, can you tell me what it is? I cannot tell you. But I pray that I may have that unction myself. Of course, the ungodly make jests upon the expression, because it has no meaning to them. Yet the children of God delight in it.

Do not expect the world to understand you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But inasmuch as Christ has chosen you out of the world, do not expect that the world will know you. If it knew Him not, who was so much better and clearer than you, how should it know you? And you, my dear Hearers, who are not born again, to whom all this must seem a foreign language—I pray you to believe that there is something which you need to understand and that in order to understand it you must be born again.

May the Spirit of God make you feel, experience, and enjoy this mystery by causing you to know the power of that gracious word, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"—if you believe in Jesus, if you look to Him, if you trust Him— if the Holy Spirit has given you faith, He has begun His work in you and He will carry it on and perfect it to the praise of His glory forever. May it be so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and therefore I will not repeat any of the fears which naturally thrive around such a shock as I have received. The doctor says, "You may be well soon of that knee but do not deceive yourself by trying the brain till it has had a fair chance of recovery." I know what he means and I feel I must submit to be away from my delightful work till I can begin again without absolute folly.

The good points of the whole matter are very many. The name of the Lord is prayed for the splendid way in which, in the sorrowful absence of both pastors, all the Church has stuck to its

work and the blessing has not ceased. I am cheered and comforted by this. And I am sure that the Lord has some great design of love to answer by the heaped up coals of fire which have burned upon our hearth. He is good. As surely good in the dark as in the sunlight. All is well. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Perhaps by the way of bodily weakness may come increased spiritual strength. Love unbroken, from your suffering pastor, C. H. SPURGEON. Mentone, January 17, 1889.

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

John 3,8 #630 - The Holy Spirit Compared to the Wi

THE HOLY SPIRIT COMPARED

TO THE WIND

NO. 630

A SERMON PREACHED

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but

cannot tell from where it comes and where it goes. So is

everyone that is born of the Spirit."

John 3:8.

AT the present moment I am not able to enter fully into the subject of

the new birth. I am very weary, both in body and mind and cannot attempt that great and mysterious theme. To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under Heaven and it is not the time to preach upon regeneration when the head is aching, nor to discourse upon the new nature when the mind is distracted. I selected my text with the intention of fixing upon one great illustration which strikes me just now as being so suggestive, and with Divine assistance I may be able to work it out with profit to you and ease to myself.

I shall endeavor to bring before you the parallel which our Savior here draws between the wind and the Holy Spirit. It is a remarkable fact, known, I dare say to most of you, that both in the Hebrew and Greek languages the same word is used for spirit and for wind—so that our Savior, as it were, rode upon the wings of the wind, while he was instructing the seeking Rabbi in the deep things of God. He caught at the very name of the wind as a means of fastening a spiritual truth upon the memory of the enquirer, hinting to us that language should be watched by the teacher that he may find out suitable words and employ those which will best assist the disciple to comprehend and to retain his teaching. "The wind," said He, "blows," and the very same word would have been employed if He had meant to say, "The Spirit blows where He wishes."

There was intended, doubtless, to be a very close and intimate parallel between the Spirit of God and the wind, or otherwise the great Ruler of Providence who invisibly controlled the confusion of Babel would not have fashioned human language so that the same word should stand for both. Language, as well as nature, illustrates the wisdom of God! It is only in His light that we see light—may the Holy Spirit be graciously pleased to reveal Himself in His Divine operations to all our waiting minds.

We are taught in God's Word that the Holy Spirit comes upon the sons of men and makes them new creatures. Until He enters them they are "dead in trespasses and sins." They cannot discern the things of God because Divine Truths of God are spiritual and spiritually discerned—and unrenewed men are carnal and possess not the power to search out the deep things of God. The Spirit of God creates new in the children of God and then in their new-born spirituality they discover and come to understand spiritual things, but not before. And, therefore, my beloved Hearers, unless you possess the Spirit, no metaphors, however simple, can reveal Him to you.

Let us not mention the name of the Holy Spirit without due honor. Forever blessed are You, most glorious Spirit, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Son! Let all the angels of God worship You! Be You had in honor world without end!

I. We will consider IN WHAT SENSE THE HOLY SPIRIT MAY BE COMPARED TO THE WIND. The Spirit of God, to help the spiritually-minded in their study of His Character and Nature condescends to compare Himself to dew, fire, oil, water and other suggestive types. And among the rest our Savior uses the metaphor of wind. What is the first thought here but that of mystery? It was the objection on the score of mystery which our Lord was trying to remove from the mind of Nicodemus. Nicodemus in effect, said, "I cannot understand it. How can it be? A man born again when he is old, created over again and that from an invisible agency from above? How can these things be?"

Jesus at once directed his attention to the wind, which is none the less real and operative because of its mysterious origin and operation. You cannot tell from where the wind comes—you know it blows from the north or from the west—but at what particular place does that wind start on its journey? Where will it pause in its onward flight? You see that it is blowing to the east or to the west, but where is it going? From where did these particles of air originate which rush so rapidly past? Where are they going? By what law are they guided in their course and where will their journey end?

The gale may be blowing due east here, but it may be driving west a hundred miles away. In one district the wind may be rushing from the north and yet not far from it there may be a strong current from the south. Those who ascend in balloons tell us that they meet with crosscurrents—one wind blowing in this direction and another layer of air moving towards an opposite quarter—how is this? If you have watched the skies you must occasionally have noticed a stream of clouds hurrying to the right, while higher up, another company is sailing to the left! It is a question whether thunder and lightning may not be produced by the friction of two currents of air traveling in different directions. But why is it that this current takes it into its head to go this way, while another steers for quite another port? Will they meet across each other's path in regions far away?

Are there whirlpools in the air as in the water? Are there eddies, currents, rivers of air, lakes of air? Is the whole atmosphere like the sea, only composed of less dense matter? If so, what is it that stirs up that great deep of air and bids it howl in the hurricane and then constrains it to subside into the calm? The philosopher may scheme some conjecture to prove that the "trade winds" blow at certain intervals because of the sun crossing the equator at those periods and that there must necessarily be a current of air going towards the equator because of the rarefaction. But he cannot tell you why the weathercock on yonder church steeple turned this morning from south-west to due east.

He cannot tell me why it is that the sailor finds that his sails are at one time filled with wind and in a few minutes they fall loosely about so that he must steer upon another tack if he would make headway. The various motions of the air remain a mystery to all but the infinite Jehovah. My Brethren, the like mystery is observed in the work of the Spirit of God. His Person and work are not to be comprehended by the mind of man. He may be here tonight, but you cannot see Him—He speaks to one heart, but others cannot hear His voice. He is not recognizable by the unrefined senses of the unregenerate.

The spiritual man discerns Him, feels Him, hears Him and delights in Him, but neither wit nor learning can lead a man into the secret. The Believer is often bowed down with the weight of the Spirit's Glory, or lifted up upon the wings of His majesty. But even he knows not how these feelings are worked in him. The fire of holy life is at seasons gently fanned with the soft breath of Divine comfort, or the deep sea of spiritual existence stirred with the mighty blast of the Spirit's rebuke. But still it is forevermore a mystery how the eternal God comes into contact with the finite mind of His creature, man. God is filling all Heaven, meanwhile, and yet dwelling in a human body as in a temple—occupying all space and yet operating upon the will, the judgment, the mind of the poor insignificant creature called man.

We may enquire, but who can answer us? We may search, but who shall lead us into the hidden things of the Most High? He brooded over chaos and produced order, but who shall tell us after what fashion He worked? He overshadowed the Virgin and prepared a body for the Son of God, but into this secret who shall dare pry? His is the anointing, sealing, comforting and sanctifying of the saints—but how does He work all these things? He makes intercession for us according to the will of God. He dwells in us and leads us into all the Truths of God—but who among us can explain to his fellow man the order of the Divine working?

Though veiled from human eye like the Glory which shone between the cherubim, we believe in the Holy Spirit and therefore see Him. But if our faith needed to sustain it, we should never believe at all. Mystery is far from being all which the Savior would teach by this simile. Surely He meant to show us that the operations of the Spirit are like the wind for Divinity. Who can create a wind? The most ambitious of human princes would scarcely attempt to turn, much less to send forth, the wind! These steeds of the storm know no bit nor bridle, neither will they come at any man's bidding. Let our senators do what they will, they will scarcely have the madness to legislate the winds!

Old Boreas, as the heathens called him, is not to be bound with chains and welded on an earthly anvil, or in a vulcanian forge. "The wind blows where it wishes." And it does so because God directs it and suffers it not to stay for man nor to tarry for the sons of men. So with the Spirit of God. All the true operations of the Spirit are due in no sense whatever to man, but always to God and to His Sovereign will. Revivalists may get up excitement with the best intentions and may warm peoples' hearts till they begin to cry out, but all this ends in nothing unless it is Divine work. Have I not said scores of times from this pulpit, "All that is of Nature's spinning must be unraveled"?

Every particle which Nature puts upon the foundation will turn out to be but "wood, hay and stubble," and will be consumed. It is only "the gold, the silver and the precious stones" of God's building that will stand the fiery test. "You must be born again from above," for human

regenerations are lies. You may blow with your mouth and produce some trifling effects upon trifles as light as air. Man in his zeal may set the windmills of silly minds in motion. But, truly, to stir men's hearts with substantial and eternal Truths of God needs a celestial breeze such as the Lord alone can send!

Did not our Lord also intend to hint at the Sovereignty of the Spirit's work? For what other reason did He say, "The wind blows where it wishes?" There is an arbitrariness about the wind. It does just as it pleases and the laws which regulate its changes are unknown to man. "Free as the wind," we say—"the wild winds." So is the mighty working of God! It is a very solemn thought and one which should tend to make us humble before the Lord—that we are, as to the matter of salvation—entirely in His hands! If I have a moth in my hand tonight I can bruise its wings, or I can crush it at my will and by no attempts of its own can it escape from me. And every sinner is absolutely in the hands of God and—let him remember he is in the hand of an angry God, too.

The only comfort is that he is in the hand of a God who, for Jesus' sake, delights to have mercy upon even the vilest of the vile. Sinner, God can give you the Holy Spirit if He wills. But if He should say concerning you, "Let him alone," your fate is sealed, your damnation is sure! It is a thought which some would say is "enough to freeze all energy." Beloved, I would to God it would freeze the energy of the flesh and make the flesh dead in the sense of powerlessness—for God never truly begins to show His might till we have seen an end of all human power. I tell you, Sinner, you are as dead concerning spiritual things as the corpse that is laid in its coffin! No, as the corpse that is rotting in its grave and has become, like Lazarus in the tomb, stinking and offensive.

There is a voice that can call you forth out of your sepulcher, but if that voice comes not remember where you are—justly damned, justly ruined, justly cut off forever from all hope. What do you say? Do you tremble at this? Do you cry, "O God! Have pity upon me"? He will hear your cry, Sinner, for there never yet was a sincere cry that went up to Heaven, though it were ever so feeble, but what it had an answer of peace. When one of the old saints lay dying, he could only say, "O Lord, I trust You languida fide," with a languid faith. It is poor work that, but, oh, it is safe work. You can only trust Christ with a feeble faith. If it is such a poor trembling faith that it does not grip Him, but only touches the hem of His garment, it nevertheless saves you!

If you can look at Him, though it is only a great way off, yet it saves you. And oh, what a comfort this is, that you are still on pleading terms with Him and in a place of hope! "Whoever believes is not condemned." But, oh, do not trifle with the day of Divine Grace, lest having frequently heard the warning, and hardened your neck just as often, you should "suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy!" If He shuts you out, none can bid you come in! If He does but close the iron bar, you are shut out in the darkness of obstinacy, obduracy and despair forever—the victim of your own delusions!

Sinner, if God saves you, He shall have all the glory—for He has a right to do as He wills—for He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But still, I think I have not yet brought out what is in the text. Do you not think that the text was intended to show the varied methods in which the Spirit of God works in the conversion and regeneration of men? "The wind blows where it wishes." Now observe the different force of the wind. This afternoon the wind seemed as if it would tear up every tree and doubtless, had they been in leaf, many of those noble princes of the forest must have stretched themselves prone

upon the earth. But God takes care that in these times of boisterous gales there should be no leaf and therefore the wind gets but little purchase with which to drag up a tree.

But the wind does not always blow as it did this afternoon. On a summer's evening there is such a gentle zephyr that even the gnats who have been arranging a dance among themselves are not disturbed, but keep to their proper places. Yes, the aspen seems as if it could be quiet, though you know it keeps forever quivering, according to the old legend that it was the tree on which the Savior hung and therefore trembles still as though through fear of the sin which came upon it. It is but a legend. There are times when all is still and calm, when everything is quiet and you can scarcely detect the wind at all.

Now just so it is with the Spirit of God. To some of us He came like a "rushing mighty wind." Oh, what tearing of soul there were then! My spirit was like a sea tossed up into tremendous waves, made, as Job says, "To boil like a pot," till one would think the deep were hoary. Oh, how that wind came crashing through my soul and every hope I had was bowed as the trees of the wood in the tempest! Read the story of John Bunyan's conversion—it was just the same. Turn to Martin Luther—you find his conversion of the same sort. So might I mention hundreds of biographies in which the Spirit of God came like a tornado sweeping everything before it and the men could not but feel that God was in the whirlwind.

To others He comes so gently they cannot tell when first the Spirit of God came. They recollect that night when mother prayed so with brothers and sisters and when they could not sleep for hours because the big tears stood in their eyes on account of sin. They recollect the Sunday school and the teacher there. They remember that earnest minister. They cannot say exactly when they gave their hearts to God and they cannot tell about any violent convictions. They are often comforted by that text, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." But they cannot get any farther— they sometimes wish they could.

Well, they need not wish it, for the Spirit of God, as a Sovereign, will always choose His own way of operation. And if it is but the wind of the Holy Spirit, remember it is as saving in its gentleness as in its terror and is as efficient to make us new creatures when it comes with the zephyr's breath as when it comes with the hurricane's force. Do not quarrel with God's way of saving you! If you are brought to the Cross be thankful for it—Christ will not mind how you got there. If you can say, "He is all my salvation and all my desire," you never came to that without the Spirit of God bringing you to it. Do not, therefore, think you came the wrong way, for that is impossible!

Again, the wind not only differs in force, but it differs in direction. We have been saying several times the wind is always shifting. Perhaps there never were two winds that did blow exactly in the same direction. I mean that if we had power to detect the minute points of the compass, there would be found some deviation in every current, although, of course, for all practical purposes it blows from certain distinct points which the mariner marks out. Now, the Spirit of God comes from different directions.

You know very well, dear Friends, that sometimes the Spirit of God will blow with mighty force from one denomination of Christians. Then suddenly they seem to be left and God will raise up another body of Christians, fill them with Himself and qualify them for usefulness. In the days of Wesley and Whitefield there was very little of the Divine Spirit anywhere except among the Methodists. I

am sure they have not a monopoly of Him now. The Divine Spirit blows also from other quarters. Sometimes He uses one man, sometimes another. We hear of a revival in the North of Ireland. By-and-by it is in the South of Scotland. It comes just as God wills, for direction.

And you know, too, dear Friends, it comes through different instrumentalities in the same Church. Sometimes the wind blows from this pulpit— God blesses me to your conversion. Another time it is from my good sister, Mrs. Bartlett's class. On a third occasion it is the Sunday school. Again, it may be another class, or the preaching of the young men, or from the individual exertion of private Believers. God causes that wind to blow just which way He wills. He works, also, through different texts of Scripture. You were converted and blessed under one text—it was quite another that was made useful to me.

Some of you were brought to Christ by terrors, others of you by love, by sweet wooing words. The wind blows as God directs. Now, dear Friends, whenever you take up a religions biography, do not sit down and say, "Now I will see whether I am just like this person." Nonsense! God never repeats Himself. Men make steel pens—thousands of grosses of them—all alike, but I will be bound to say that in quills from the common, there are no two of them precisely the same. If you look, you will soon discover that they differ in a variety of ways. Certain gardeners cut their trees into the shape of cheeses and a number of unnatural forms, but God's trees do not grow that way, they grow just anyway—gnarl their roots and twist their branches.

Great painters do not continually paint the same picture again and again and again, and my Divine Master never puts His pencil on the canvas to produce the same picture twice. Every Christian is a distinct work of Divine Grace on God's part which has in it some originality, some portion distinct from all others. I do not believe in trying to make all history uniform. It is said that Richard III had a humpback. Whether he really was deformed, or whether history gave him the humpback, I cannot tell. But it is said that all his courtiers thought it was the most beautiful humpback that ever was seen and they all began to grow humpbacks, too!

And I have known ministers who had some peculiar idiosyncrasy of experience which was nothing better than a spiritual humpback—but their people all began to have humpbacks, too—to think and talk all in the same way and to have the same doubts and fears. Now that will not do! It is not the way in which the Most High acts with regard to the wind and if He chooses to take all the points of the compass and make use of them all, let us bless and glorify His name! Are not the different winds various in their qualities? Few of us like an east wind. Most of us are very glad when the wind blows from the south. Vegetation seems to love much the south-west. A stiff northeaster is enough to make us perish. And long continuance of the north may well freeze the whole earth! While from the west the wind seems to come laden with health from the deep blue sea. And though sometimes too strong for the sick, yet it is never a bad time when the west wind blows. The ancients all had their different opinions about wind. Some were dry, some were rainy. Some affected this disease, some touched this part of men, some the other. Certain it is that God's Holy Spirit has different qualities. In the Canticles He blows softly with the sweet breath of love. Look farther and you get that same Spirit blowing fiercely with threats and denunciation.

Sometimes you find Him convicting the world "of sin, of righteousness, of judgment." That is the north wind. At other times opening up Christ to the sinner and giving him joy and comfort. That is the south wind that blows softly and gives a balminess in which poor troubled hearts rejoice. And

yet "all these works the same Spirit." Indeed, my subject is all but endless, and therefore I must stop. But even in the matter of duration you know how the wind will sometimes blow six weeks in this direction and, again, continue in another direction. And the Spirit of God does not always work with us—He does as He pleases—He comes and He goes. We may be in a happy hallowed frame at one time, and at another we may have to cry, "Come from the four winds, O Breath!"

II. We will consider. in the second place, THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE EFFECTS OF THE WIND. "You hear the sound of it." Ah, that we do! The wind sometimes wails as if you could hear the cry of mariners far out at sea, or the moans of the widows that must weep for them. And, oh, the Spirit of God sets men wailing with an exceedingly bitter cry for sin, as one that is in sorrow for his first-born.

"You hear the sound of it." Oh, it is a blessed sound, that wailing! Angels rejoice over "one sinner that repents." Then comes the wind at another time with a triumphant sound, and if there is an Aeolian harp in the window, how it swells, sweeps, descends—then rises again! It gives all the tones of music and makes the air glad with its jubilant notes. So with the Holy Spirit—sometimes He gives us faith, makes us bold—other times full of assurance, confidence, joy and peace in believing. "You hear the sound" of a full diapason of the Holy Spirit's mighty melody within the soul of man filling him with peace and joy and rest and love.

Sometimes the wind comes, too, with another sound as though it were contending. You heard it, perhaps, this afternoon. We who are a little in the country hear it more than you do—it is as though giants were struggling in the sky together. It seems as if two seas of air, both lashed to fury, met and dashed against some unseen cliffs with terrible uproar. The Spirit of God comes into the soul sometimes and makes great contention with the flesh. Oh, what a stern striving there is against unbelief, against lust, against pride, against every evil thing.

"You hear the sound of it." You that know what Divine experience means—you know when to go forth to fight your sins. When you can hear "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees," then you bestir yourself to destroy your sins. Sometimes the wind comes with a sweep as though it were going on forever. It comes past and dashes through the trees, sweeping away the rotten branches. Then away it goes across the Alps, dashing down an avalanche in its course, still onward. And as it flies, it blows away everything that is frail and weak. And on, on, on it speeds its way to some unknown goal.

And thus it is sometimes the Spirit of God will come right through us, as if He were bearing us away to that spiritual heritage which is our sure future destiny—bearing away coldness, barrenness, everything before it. We do not lament then that we do not pray. We do not believe that we cannot pray—"I can do everything," is our joyful shout as we are carried on the wings of the wind. "You hear the sound of it." I hope you have heard it sometimes in all its powerful, overwhelming, mighty influence till your soul has been blown away.

"You hear the sound of it." But then the wind does something more than make a sound. And so does the Holy Spirit. It WORKS and produces manifest results. Just think what the wind is doing tonight. I cannot tell at what pitch it may be now. It is just possible that in some part of the ocean a vessel scuds along almost under bare poles. The mariners do their best to reef the sails—away she goes—now the mast is gone—they do their best to bear up but they find that in the teeth of the

gale they cannot stand.

The ship dashes on the rocks and she is wrecked. And, oh, the Spirit of God is a great wrecker of false hopes and carnal confidences! I have seen the Spirit of God come to a sinner like a storm to a ship at sea. He had to take down the top gallants of the sinner's pride. Then every thread of carnal confidence had to be reefed and then his hope, itself, had to be cut away. And on, on the vessel went, until she struck a rock and down she went. The man from that time never dared trust in his merits for he had seen his merits wrecked and broken in pieces by the wind.

The wind, too, remember, is a great leveler. It always aims at everything that is high. If you are down low in the street you escape its fury. But climb to the top of the Monument, or St. Paul's and see whether you do not feel it! Get into the valley, it is all right. The lower branches of the trees are scarcely moved, but the top branches are rocked to and fro by it. It is a great leveler! So is the Holy Spirit. He never sees a man high but He brings him down. He makes every high thought bow before the majesty of His might.

And if you have any high thoughts tonight, rest assured that when the Spirit of God comes He will lay them low, even with the ground. Now do not let this make you fear the Holy Spirit. It is a blessed thing to be rocked so as to have our hopes tested and it is a precious thing to have our carnal confidences shaken. And how blessedly the wind purifies the atmosphere! In the Swiss valleys there is a heaviness in the air which makes the inhabitants unhealthy. They take quinine and you see them going about with big swellings in their necks.

From Martigny to Bretagne, there is a great valley in which you will see hundreds of persons diseased. The reason is that the air does not circulate. They are breathing the same air, or some of it, that their fathers breathed before them. There seems to be no ventilation between the two parts of the giant Alps and the air never circulates. But if they have a great storm which sweeps through the valleys it is a great blessing to the people. And so the Spirit of God comes and cleanses out our evil thoughts and vain imaginations—and though we do not like the hurricane, yet it brings spiritual health to our soul. Again the wind is a great trier of the nature of things. Here comes a great rushing up the street. It sweeps over the heaps of rubbish lying in the road. Away goes all the light chaff, paper and other things which have no weight in them! They cannot stand the brunt of its whirling power. But see, the pieces of iron, the stones and all weighty things are left unmoved. In the country you will often see the farmer severing the chaff from the wheat by throwing it up into a current of air and the light husks all blow away, while the heavy wheat sinks on the heap, cleansed and purified. So is the Holy Spirit the great testing power and the result of His operations will be to show men what they are.

Here is a hypocrite, he has passed muster up to now and reckons himself to be a true and genuine man. But there comes a blast from Heaven's mighty Spirit and he finds himself to be lighter than vanity—he has no weight in him, he is driven on and has no rest. He can find no peace. He hurries from one refuge of lies to another. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." Thus also we try the doctrines of men, we bring the breath of Inspiration to bear upon them—do they abide the test? Or are they driven away? Can you hold that truth in the presence of God? Can you cling to it and find it stable in the hour of trial?

Is it a nice pleasant speculation for a sunny day when all is calm and bright, or will it bear the rough rude blast of adversity when God's Holy Spirit is purifying you with His healthful influence? True Christians and sound doctrines have ballast and weight in them—they are not moved nor driven away. But empty professors and hollow dogmas are scattered like chaff before the wind when the Lord shall blow upon them with the breath of His Spirit. Therefore examine yourselves—try the doctrines and see if they are of God. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord.

Have root in yourselves—then you will not wither in the hot blast, nor be driven away in the tempestuous day. Is not the Spirit moreover like unto the wind in its developing of character? See the dust is lying all over the picture, you cannot see the fair features of the beauteous sketch beneath. Blow off the dust and the fine colors will be seen and once more the skill of the painter will be admired. Have you ever noticed some piece of fine mosaic, or perhaps some well-cut engraving on metal all hidden and the fine lines filled up with dust?

You have blown off the accumulation and then you could admire the work. So does the Spirit of God. Men get all covered with dust in the hot dusty roadside of life till they are nearly the color of the earth itself. But they come to the hilltop of Calvary and here they stand till the wind of Heaven has cleansed them from all the dust that has gathered around their garments. Oh there is nothing like communion with the Spirit of God to counteract the earthly tendencies of a business life! There are some men that get covered with a yellow dust till they are almost hidden by it. They can talk of nothing else but money. Gold, gold, gold is getting to occupy nearly every thought.

Now I have no quarrel with money in its right place, but I do not like to see men live in it. I always try to drive away that mean and groveling spirit which lives for nothing else but to accumulate money, but I cannot always succeed. Now the Spirit of God will make a man see his folly and put his money into its right position and place the Graces of the Christian character where men can see them and glorify God in them. Never let your business character or professional skill dim and hide your Christianity. If you do, God's Spirit will come to brighten you up and He will have no mercy on these, but will, in love to your soul, cleanse and give luster to God's work which is worked in you.

I have also noticed how helpful the wind is to all who choose to avail themselves of it. In Lincolnshire, where the country is flat and below the level of the sea, they are obliged to drain the land by means of windmills and hundreds of them may be seen pumping up the water so as to relieve the land of the excess moisture. In many parts of the country nearly all the wheat and corn is ground by means of the wind. If it were not for the wind the inhabitants would be put to great inconvenience.

The Spirit of God is thus also a mighty helper to all who will avail themselves of His influences. You are inundated with sin, a flood of iniquity comes in—you can never bale out the torrent. But with the help of God's Spirit it can be done! He will so assist that you shall see the flood gradually descending and your heart once more purified. You need always to ask His help—fresh sin, like falling showers, will be poured into you by every passing day and you will need a continuous power to cast it out— you may have it in God's Spirit! He will, with ceaseless energy, help you to combat sin and make you more than a conqueror!

Or, on the other hand, if you need some power to break up and prepare your spiritual food for you, you will find no better help than what God's Spirit can give. In Eastern countries they grind corn by hand, two sitting at a small stone mill. But it is a poor affair at best—so are our own vain attempts to prepare the bread of Heaven for ourselves. We shall only get a little and that little badly ground. Commentators are good in their way, but give me the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He makes the passage clear and gives me to eat of the finest wheat. How often we have found our utter inability to understand some part of Divine Truth—we asked some of God's people and they helped us a little—but after all, we were not satisfied till we took it to the Throne of heavenly Grace and implored the teachings of the blessed Spirit!

Then how sweetly it was opened to us! We could eat of it spiritually. It was no longer husk and shell, hard to be understood. It was as bread to us and we could eat to the full. Brethren, we must make more use of the wisdom which comes from above, for the Spirit, like the wind, is open to us all to employ for our own personal benefit. I see also here a thought as to the co-operation of man and the Spirit in all Christian work. It has pleased God to make us co-workers with Him—fellow laborers—both in the matter of our own salvation and also in the effort to benefit others. Look for a moment at yon stately boat—she moves not because of her sails but she would not reach the desired haven without them.

It is the wind which propels her forward—but the wind would not act upon her as it does unless she had the rigging all fixed—her masts standing and her sails all bent so as to catch the passing breeze. But now that human seamanship has done its best, see how she flies! She will soon reach her haven with such a favoring gale as that. You have only to stand still and see how the wind bears her on like a thing of life. And so it is with the human heart. When the Spirit comes to the soul that is ready to receive such influences, then He helps you on to Christian Grace and Christian work and makes you bear up through all opposition till you come to the port of peace and can anchor safely there. Without Him we can do nothing—without us He will not work.

We are to preach the Gospel to every creature and while one plants and another waters, God adds the increase. We are to work out our own salvation—He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. We must go up to possess the goodly land with our own spear and sword—but the hornet goes before us to drive out the foe. Jericho shall be captured by a Divine and miraculous interference, but even there rams' horns shall find a work to do and must be employed. The host of Midian shall be slain, but our cry is, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." We give God all the glory, nevertheless we use the means.

The water of Jordan must be sought out and used by all who desire a cleansing like Naaman the Syrian. A lump of figs must be used if other Hezekiahs are to be healed—but the Spirit is, after all, the great Cleanser and Healer of His people Israel. The lesson is clear to all—the wind turns mills that men make. It fills sails that human hands have spread. And the Spirit blesses human effort, crowns with success our labors, establishes the work of our hands upon us and teaches all through that, "the hand of the diligent makes rich." And, "if a man will not work, neither shall he eat."

Another thought suggests itself to my mind in connection with the wind and human effort. It is this—How completely dependent men are upon the wind as to what it shall do for them. They are entirely at its mercy as to its time of blowing, its strength and the direction it will take. I have

already dwelt upon this thought of the sovereignty of the wind, but it comes up here in a more practical form. The steamer now can steer almost anywhere they please and at all times it will proceed on its voyage.

But the sailing ship must tack according to the wind and when becalmed must wait for the breeze to spring up. The watermill and steam mill can be worked night and day, but the mill that depends upon the wind must abide by the wind's times of blowing and must turn round its sails so as to suit the direction of the current of air. In like manner we are compelled to wait on the pleasure of the Spirit. There is no reservoir of water which we can turn on when we will and work as we please. We would forget God far more than we do now if that were the case. The sailor who is depending on the wind anxiously looks up to the masthead to see how the breeze is shifting and turning round the vane. And he scans the heavens to see what weather he is likely to have.

He would not need to care nearly so much as he does now that he is absolutely dependent on the wind, if he had steam power so as to sail in the very teeth of the storm if he so willed. God, then, keeps us looking up to Heaven by making us to be completely at His mercy as to the times and ways of giving us His helping power. It is a blessed thing to wait on God, watching for His hand and in quiet contentment leaving all to Him. Brethren, let us do our part faithfully, spread every sail, make all as perfect as human skill and wisdom can direct and then in patient continuance in well-doing, wait the Spirit's propitious gales, neither murmuring because He tarries, nor be taken unawares when He comes upon us in His Sovereign pleasure to do that which seems good in His sight.

Now tonight I have only given you some hints on this subject—you can work it out for yourselves. As you hear the wind you may get more sermons out of it than I can give you just now. The thing is perfectly inexhaustible. And I think the business of the minister is not to say all that can be said about the subject. Somebody remarked concerning a certain minister that he was a most unfair preacher because he always exhausted the subject and left nothing for anybody else to say.

That will never be said of me and I would rather that it should not. A minister should suggest germs of thought, open up new ways and present, if possible, the Truth of God in such a method as to lead men to understand that the half is not told them. And now, my dear Hearer, whether you listen often to my voice or have now stepped in for the first time I would like to ring this in your ear. Do you know the Spirit of God? If you have not the Spirit, you are none of His. "You must be born again." "What, Lord, 'MUST?' Do You not mean 'may?' " No, you must. "Does it not mean, 'You can be?' " No, you must. When a man says, "must," it all depends upon who he is. When God says, "must," there it stands and it cannot be questioned.

There are the flames of Hell—would you escape from them? You must be born again. There are Heaven's glories sparkling in their own light— would you enjoy them? You must be born again! There is the peace and joy of a Believer, would you have it? You must be born again. What, not a crumb from off the table without this? No, not one. Not a drop of water to cool your burning tongues except you are born again. This is the one condition that never changes. God never alters it and never will.

You must, must, MUST. Which shall it be? Shall your will stand, or God's will? O, let God's "must" ride right over you and bow yourselves down and say, "Lord, I must! Then I will! Ah, and it has

come to this—I must tonight. Give me Christ, or else I die. I have hold of the knocker of the door of Your mercy and I must, I WILL get that door open. I will never let You go except You bless me! You say, must, Lord, and I say, must, too." "You must, you must be born again." God fulfill the "must" in each of your cases, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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

John 3,14-15 #153 - The Mysteries of the Bronze Se

THE MYSTERIES OF THE

BRONZE SERPENT

NO. 153

A SERMON 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 whoever believes in Him should not perish

but have eternal life."

John 3:14-15.

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 it represents. For instance, the kind of noise which is uttered by some animal but which in some way or other, by a species of figures, 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 inflames 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 have. 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. 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 blows where it lists."

And when Jesus 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, today, 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 endeavor 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 bronze serpent—the type of Jesus Christ crucified. Let me then note what was to be done with the bronze 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 STATE 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 battle 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 before the rumor 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 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 writhing 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 if we let sin alone 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 knows not that there is a serpent there. For there is no serpent except in the dregs. It is sure that the woman who boasts herself of her riches and arrays herself right gaudily in her pride knows not that a serpent binds the zone of her waist. For there is no serpent there as she knows but she shall know it when the days of her frivolity are ended.

It is true he that curses God knows not that a viper has infused the poison which he speaks out against his Maker. But he shall know it in days to come. Look 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 has 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, you are nothing when compared with fiery lusts. You may infuse poison into the blood but lusts do that and do something more—they infuse damnation into the soul! When sin has had its perfect work, when its last fair conception has been brought forth and has 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. His released spirit, while 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 has run its race. It is something to be noted and remembered with delight.

But the death of the sinner who has been bitten by his lusts and has 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 deathbed 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 ever heard how men do shake 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 gulf, they clutch the physician and desire him, if possible, to lengthen out the thread of their existence! Yes, 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 you 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 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 you must die also! And will you march on heedlessly, will you go on step after step, singing merrily all the way and dreaming not of that which is to come?

Oh, will you be like the silly bullock that goes easily to the slaughter, or will you be like the lamb that licks the butcher's knife! Mad, mad, O Man, that you should go to eternal wrath and to the chambers of fell destruction and yet no sigh comes from your heart—no groan is uttered by your lips! You die every day but never groan till the last day of your death— which is the beginning of your 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 bronze serpent. And the remedy for sinners is Christ crucified. "Stupid nonsense," said some of the children of Israel when they heard that a bronze 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 bronze serpent do it? It is impossible!"

This much I know, if they did not despise the bronze serpent, there are many that despise Christ crucified. Shall I tell you what they say of Him? They say of Him as they did of the bronze 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 bronze serpent, not a golden one and how could a bronze 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 bronze 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 skeptic, "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 foolishness to them that perish. 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 bronze 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 bronze 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 anyone might have thought of, but which would have been beneath their thought. But when you come to study and understand the marvelous 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 bronze 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 forever 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 has lifted Him up. For He has 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 bronze 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 endeavor to explain it to them."

Now this is what many priestly persons in this age and in ages past have tried to do. They think the Gospels 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 bronze 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 bronze serpent must be wrapped up because it would 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 bronze 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 ceremonies!"

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 bronze serpent and made a great smoke so that the people could not see it. 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 can only speak in a plowman'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—with the dark and mysterious language he talked—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 government 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. 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 takes away the sins of the world."

And let it be remembered that if the minister does 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 different 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,' I will still live and still breathe as long as I can feel in myself, "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 WAS ISRAEL TO DO? What are convicted sinners to do? The Israelites were to look. The convicted 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? He is like a great standardbearer, 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 bronze 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 is the use of it? It can do us 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 deathpangs 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 bronze serpent and he should live. Ah, my Hearers, I have such an one here today. 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 is 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, you little know how direful your doom shall be. You may this day tell me you do not believe in the Savior. You may turn away your 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 convict! It is one called Death! Look me in the face today. And tell me I preach you a lie—you can do that easily! Look Death in the face tomorrow and tell him that and you will find it harder work.

Yes and if you have the foolhardiness to do that, you will not look at the face of the Great Judge, when He shall sit upon the Throne! Tell Him that His Gospel was not true! Frightened and alarmed you shall rush here and there to hide yourselves from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne. Perhaps there were some in the camp who said they would look by-andby, "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 before they uttered the last word they were stiff and cold as clay! 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 the sea swallowed them and they went down alive into the depths. Take heed of procrastination. Delays are dangerous and some delays are damnable! Look here, look here to Christ bleeding on the Cross. Look now, for the Spirit says, "today, if you 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 bronze serpent?" said they, "not we. Doctor, come here, 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 bronze 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, you may try—you 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 you. Then you shall have no time to attempt a cure but shall be swept away—not to the hospital of mercy but like the leper without the city—you shall 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 whoremonger—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 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 you chief of sinners, believe in the Lord Jesus. And be your sins ever so many, He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. And yet how many perish through many 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 bronze serpent was lifted up that everyone in the camp who was bitten might live. And now Christ is lifted up to you that "whosoever believes 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 you 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 her.

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, or whereabouts in the camp they lived. They did but look and live. And now you that have grown gray in iniquity, whose hair 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 gray 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 looks 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 bronze 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 You my 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 forever die."

And now poor Soul I have almost done. But I cannot let you go. I see you with the tear in your eye. I hear you confessing your guilt and bemoaning your sin. I bid you look to my Master and live. Be not afraid to try my Lord and Master. I know what your bashfulness is. I have felt the same and thought He never would save me. Come Soul, you are in secret now with yourself—for though there are thousands around you—you think I am speaking alone to you. And so I am. My Brother, my Sister— you are weeping today 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 believes 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 cries aloud, she utters her voice in the streets, she invites you—she says, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the supper."

Yes, 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 believes 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, you extraordinary Sinner, venture yourself on this promise—He says you shall 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, you who are so laden with sin that you stagger under your burden. Fall down on the simple promise, "He is able to save to the uttermost." Just cast yourself wholly on Christ and if you are not saved, God's Book is a lie and God Himself has broken His Truth. But that cannot be. Come and try it. "Whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life."

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Chapter 95

John 3,16 #1850 - Immeasurable Love

IMMEASURABLE LOVE

NO. 1850

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 26, 1885.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 7, 1885.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever

believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:16.

I WAS very greatly surprised the other day, in looking over the list of

texts from which I have preached, to find that I have no record of ever having spoken from this verse. This is all the more singular because I can truly say that it might be put in the forefront of all my volumes of discourses as the sole topic of my life's ministry. It has been my one and only business to set forth the love of God to men in Christ Jesus. I heard lately of an aged minister of whom it was said, "Whatever his text, he never failed to set forth God as love and Christ as the Atonement for sin." I wish that much the same may be said of me. My heart's desire has been to sound forth as with a trumpet the good news that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We are about to meet around the communion table and I cannot preach from this text anything but a simple Gospel sermon. Can you desire a better preparation for communion? We have fellowship with God and with one another upon the basis of the infinite love which is displayed in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Gospel is the fair white linen cloth which covers the table on which the Communion Feast is set. The higher Truths of God, those Truths which belong to a more enlightened experience, those richer Truths which tell of the fellowship of the higher life—all these are helpful to holy fellowship—but I am sure not more so than those elementary and foundational Truths of God which were the means of our first entrance into the Kingdom of God. Babes in Christ and men in Christ, here, feed upon one common food. Come, you aged saints, be children again! And you that have long known your Lord, take up your first spelling book and go over your A B Cs, again, by learning that God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die—that man might live through Him!

I do not call you to an elementary lesson because you have forgotten your letters, but because it is a good thing to refresh the memory—and a blessed thing to feel young again. What the old folks

used to call the Christ-Cross Row, contained nothing but the letters. But all the books in the language are made out of that line and, therefore, do I call you back to the Cross and to Him who bled there! It is a good thing for us all to return, at times, to our starting place and make sure that we are in the way ever

Volume 31 1lasting. The love of our espousals is most likely to continue if we, again and again, begin where God began with us and where we first began with God. It is wise to come to Him afresh, as we came in that first day when, helpless, needy and heavy-laden, we stood weeping at the Cross and left our burden at His pierced feet. There we learned to look, live and love— and there would we repeat the lesson till we rehearse it perfectly in Glory!

Tonight we have to talk about the love of God—"God so loved the world." That love of God is a very wonderful thing, especially when we see it set upon a lost, ruined, guilty world. What was there in the world that God should love it? There was nothing lovable in it. No fragrant flower grew in that arid desert. Enmity to Him; hatred to His Truth; disregard of His Law; rebellion against His commandments—those were the thorns and briars which covered the waste land—but no desirable thing blossomed there. Yet, "God loved the world," says the text. "So" loved it, that even the writer of the book of John could not tell us how much! But so greatly, so Divinely did He love it that He gave His Son, His only Son, to redeem the world from perishing and to gather out of it a people to His praise.

From where did that love come? Not from anything outside of God Himself. God's love springs from Himself. He loves because it is His Nature to do so. "God is Love." As I have said already, nothing upon the face of the earth could have merited His love, though there was much to merit His displeasure. This stream of love flows from its own secret source in the eternal Deity and it owes nothing to any earth-born rain or rivulet. It springs from beneath the everlasting Throne of God and fills itself full from the springs of the Infinite. God loved because He would love. When we enquire why the Lord loved this man or that, we have to come back to our Savior's answer to the question, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." God has such love in His Nature that He must let it flow forth to a world perishing by its own willful sin! And when it flowed forth, it was so deep, so wide, so strong that even Inspiration could not compute its measure and, therefore, the Holy Spirit gave us that great little word, SO—and left us to attempt the measurement, according as we perceive more and more of Divine love.

Now, there happened to be an occasion upon which the great God could display His immeasurable love. The world had sadly gone astray. The world had lost itself. The world was tried and condemned. The world was given over to perish because of its offenses—and there was need for help. The Fall of Adam and the destruction of mankind made ample room and verge enough for Almighty Love. Amid the ruins of humanity there was space for showing how much Jehovah loved the sons of men, for the compass of His love was no less than the world, the object of it no less than to deliver men from going down to the Pit and the result of it no less than the finding of a Ransom for them. The far-reaching purpose of that love was both negative and positive, so that, believing in Jesus, men might not perish, but have eternal life. The desperate disease of man gave occasion for the introduction of that Divine Remedy which God, alone, could have devised and supplied. By the plan of mercy and the great Gift which was needed for carrying it out, the Lord found means to display His boundless love to guilty men.

Had there been no Fall and no perishing, God might have shown His love to us as He does to the pure and perfect spirits that surround His Throne. But He never could have commended His love to us to such an extent as He now does. In the Gift of His only-begotten Son, God commended His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The black background of sin makes the bright line of love shine out the more clearly. When the lightning writes the name of the Lord with flaming finger across the black brow of the tempest, we are compelled to see it—so when Love inscribes the Cross upon the jet tablet of our sin, even blind eyes must see that, "herein is love."

I might handle my text in a thousand different ways, tonight, but for simplicity's sake and to keep to the one point of setting forth the love of God, I want to make you see how great that love is by five different particulars.

I. The first is the GIFT—"God so loved the world, that He gave His onlybegotten Son." Men who love much will give much and you may usually measure the truth of love by its self-denials and sacrifices. That love which spares nothing, but spends itself to help and bless its object, is love, indeed, and not the mere name of it. Little love forgets to bring water for the feet, but great love breaks its box of alabaster and lavishes its precious ointment!

Consider, then, what this Gift was that God gave. I would have to labor for expression if I were to attempt to set forth to the fullest this priceless Gift—and I will not court a failure by attempting the impossible! I will only invite you to think of the sacred Person whom the Great Father gave in order that He might prove His love to men. It was His only-begotten Son— His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. None of us had ever such a son to give. Ours are the sons of men. His was the Son of God! The Father gave His other Self, One with Himself. When the great God gave His Son, He gave God, Himself, for Jesus is not, in His eternal Nature, less than God! When God gave God for us, He gave Himself! What more could He give? God gave His all—He gave Himself. Who can measure this love?

Judge, you fathers, how you love your sons—could you give them to die for your enemy? Judge, you that have an only son, how your hearts are entwined about your first-born, your only-begotten. There was no higher proof of Abraham's love to God than when he did not withhold from God his son, his only son, his Isaac whom he loved. And there can certainly be no greater display of love than for the Eternal Father to give His onlybegotten Son to die for us! No living thing will readily lose its offspring— man has peculiar grief when his son is taken—has not God yet more? A story has often been told of the fondness of parents for their children— how in a famine in the East, a father and mother were reduced to absolute starvation and the only possibility of preserving the life of the family was to sell one of the children into slavery.

So they considered it. The pinch of hunger became unbearable and their children, pleading for bread, tugged so painfully at their heartstrings that they must entertain the idea of selling one to save the lives of the rest. They had four sons. Who of these should be sold? It must not be the first—how could they spare their first-born? The second was so strangely like his father that he seemed a reproduction of him—and the mother said that she would never part with him. The third was so singularly like the mother that the father said he would sooner die than that this dear boy should go into bondage! And as for the fourth, he was their Benjamin, their last, their darling—they could not part with him. They concluded that it were better for them all to die together than willingly

to part with any one of their children. Do you not sympathize with them? I see you do. Yet God so loved us that, to put it very strongly, He seemed to love us better than His only Son—and did not spare Him that He might spare us! He permitted His Son to perish from among men "that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

If you desire to see the love of God in this great procedure, you must consider how He gave His Son. He did not give His Son, as you might do, to some profession in the pursuit of which you might still enjoy his company. He gave His Son to exile among men! He sent Him down to yonder manger, united with a perfect Manhood which, at the first, was in an infant's form. There He slept, where horned oxen fed! The Lord God sent the Heir of all things to toil in a carpenter's shop—to drive nails, push the plane and use the saw. He sent Him down among scribes and Pharisees, whose cunning eyes watched Him, and where cruel tongues scourged Him with base slanders. He sent Him down to hunger, thirst and poverty so dire that He had nowhere to lay His head. He sent Him down to the scourging and the crowning with thorns, to the giving of His back to the smiters and His cheeks to those that plucked off the hair.

At length He gave Him up to death—a felon's death, the death of the crucified! Behold that Cross and see the anguish of Him that dies upon it! And mark how the Father has so given Him that He hides His face from Him and seems as if He would not acknowledge Him! "Lama Sabachthani" tells us how fully God gave His Son to ransom the souls of the sinful! He gave Him to be made a curse for us! He gave Him that He might die, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

Dear Sirs, I can understand your giving up your children to go to India on her Majesty's service, or to go out to the Cameroons or the Congo upon the errands of our Lord Jesus. I can well comprehend your yielding them up, even, with the fear of a pestilential climate before you, for if they die they will die honorably in a glorious cause—but could you think of parting with them to die a felon's death, upon a gallows, condemned by those whom they sought to bless, stripped naked in body and deserted in mind? Would not that be too much? Would you not cry, "I cannot part with my son for such wretches as these! Why should he be put to a cruel death for such abominable beings who even waste their hands in the blood of their best friend?" Remember that our Lord Jesus died what His countrymen considered to be an accursed death. To the Romans it was the death of a condemned slave—a death which had all the elements of pain, disgrace and scorn mingled in it to the uttermost. "But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Oh, wondrous stretch of love, that Jesus Christ should die! Yet, I cannot leave this point till I have you notice when God gave His Son, for there is love in the time. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." But when did He do that? In His eternal purpose, He did this from before the foundation of the world! The words here used, "He gave His only-begotten Son," cannot relate exclusively to the death of Christ, for Christ was not dead at the time of the utterance of this third chapter of John! Our Lord had just been speaking with Nicodemus and that conversation took place at the beginning of His ministry. The fact is that Jesus was always the Gift of God. The promise of Jesus was made in the Garden of Eden almost as soon as Adam fell! On the spot where our ruin was accomplished, a Deliverer was bestowed whose heel should be bruised, but who should break the serpent's head beneath His foot.

Throughout the ages, the great Father stood to His Gift. He looked upon His Only-Begotten as man's hope, the inheritance of the chosen seed who, in Him, would possess all things. Every

sacrifice was God's renewal of His Gift of Grace, a reassurance that He had bestowed the Gift and would never draw back from it. The whole system of types under the Law promised that, in the fullness of time, the Lord would, in very deed, give up His Son, to be born of a woman, to bear the iniquities of His people and to die the death in their behalf! I greatly admire this pertinacity of love, for many a man, in a moment of generous excitement, can perform a supreme act of benevolence—and yet could not bear to look at it calmly and consider it from year to year! The slow fire of anticipation would have been unbearable.

If the Lord should take away yonder dear boy from his mother, she would bear the blow with some measure of patience, heavy as it would be to her tender heart. But suppose that she were credibly informed that on such a day her boy must die and thus had, from year to year, to look upon him as one dead? Would it not cast a cloud over every hour of her future life? Suppose, also, that she knew that he would be hanged upon a tree to die as one condemned? Would it not embitter her existence? If she could withdraw from such a trial, would she not? Assuredly she would! Yet the Lord God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all—doing it in His heart from age to age. Herein is love—love which many waters could not quench—love eternal, inconceivable, infinite!

Now, as this Gift refers not only to our Lord's death, but to the ages before it, so it includes also all the ages afterwards. God "so loved the world that He gave"—and still gives—"His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting, "life." The Lord is giving Christ away tonight! Oh, that thousands of you may gladly accept the unspeakable Gift! Will anyone refuse? This good Gift, this perfect Gift— can you decline it? Oh, that you may have faith to lay hold on Jesus, for thus He will be yours! He is God's free Gift to all free receivers—a full Christ for empty sinners! If you can but hold out your empty, willing hand, the Lord will give Christ to you at this moment! Nothing is freer than a gift! Nothing is more worth having than a Gift which comes fresh from the hand of God, as full of effectual power as ever it was! The fountain is eternal, but the stream from it is as fresh as when first the fountain was opened. There is no exhausting this Gift!—

"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood Shall never lose it's power Till all the ransomed Church of God Is saved to sin no more."

See, then, what is the love of God, that He gave His Son from of old and has never revoked the Gift! He stands to His Gift and continues, still, to give His dear Son to all who are willing to accept Him! Out of the riches of His Grace He has given, is giving and will give the Lord Jesus Christ—and all the priceless gifts which are contained in Him—to all needy sinners who will simply trust Him! I call upon you from this first point to admire the love of God because of the transcendent greatness of His Gift to the world, even the Gift of His only-begotten Son!

II. Now notice secondly, and, I think I may say, with equal admiration, the love of God in THE PLAN OF SALVATION. He has put it thus—"That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The way of salvation is extremely simple to understand and exceedingly easy to practice when once the heart is made willing and obedient. The method of the Covenant of Grace differs as much from that of the Covenant of Works as light from darkness. It is not said that God has given His Son to all who will keep His Law, for that we could not do and, therefore, the Gift would have been available to none of us! Nor is it said that He has given His Son to all that

experience terrible despair and bitter remorse, for that is not felt by many who, nevertheless, are the Lord's own people. But the great God has given His own Son, that, "whoever believes in Him" should not perish. Faith, however slender, saves the soul! Trust in Christ is the certainty of eternal happiness!

Now, what is it to believe in Jesus? It is just this—it is to trust yourself with Him. If your hearts are ready, though you have never believed in Jesus before, I trust you will believe in Him now. O Holy Spirit graciously make it so!

What is it to believe in Jesus? It is, first, to give your firm and cordial assent to the Truth of God that

God did send His Son, born of a woman, to stand in the place of guilty men—and that God did cause to put on Him the iniquities of us all—so that He bore the punishment due to our transgressions, being made a curse for us. We must heartily believe the Scripture which says—"The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed." I ask for your assent to the grand doctrine of Substitution which is the marrow of the Gospel! Oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to give a cordial assent to it at once, for wonderful as it is, it is a fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them! Oh that you may rejoice that this is true and be thankful that such a blessed fact is revealed by God, Himself!

Believe that the substitution of the Son of God is certain! Question not the plan, nor question its validity, or efficacy, as many do. Alas, they nick at God's great Sacrifice and count it a sorry invention! As for me, since God has ordained to save man by a substitutionary Sacrifice, I joyfully agree to His method and see no reason to do anything else but admire it and adore the Author of it! I joy and rejoice that such a plan should have been thought of, whereby the justice of God is vindicated and His mercy is set free to do all that He desires! Sin is punished in the Person of the Christ, yet mercy is extended to the guilty! In Christ, mercy is sustained by justice, and justice satisfied by an act of mercy! The worldly wise say hard things about this device of Infinite Wisdom, but as for me, I love the very name of the Cross and count it to be the center of Wisdom, the focus of Love, the heart of Righteousness. This is a main point of faith—to give a hearty assent to the giving of Jesus to suffer in our place and to agree, with all our soul and mind, to this way of salvation.

The second thing is that you accept this for yourself. In Adam's sin, you did not sin personally, for you were not, then, in existence. Yet you fell— and neither can you now complain about it—for you have willingly endorsed and adopted Adam's sin by committing personal transgressions. You have laid your hand, as it were, upon Adam's sin, and made it your own by committing personal and actual sin. Thus you perished by the sin of another which you adopted and endorsed—and in like manner must you be saved by the righteousness of Another which you are to accept and appropriate. Jesus has offered an atonement and that Atonement becomes yours when you accept it by putting your trust in Him. I want you now to say—

"My faith does lay her hand On that dear head of Yours, While, like a penitent, I stand And here confess my sin."

Surely this is no very difficult matter. To say that Christ, who hung upon the Cross, shall be my Christ, my Surety, needs neither stretch of intellect nor splendor of character! And yet it is the act which brings salvation to the soul!

One more thing is necessary and that is personable trust. First comes assent to the Truth, then acceptance of that truth for yourself—and then a simple trusting of yourself wholly to Christ as your Substitute. The essence of faith is trust, reliance, dependence. Fling away every other confidence of every sort except confidence in Jesus. Do not allow a ghost of a shade of a shadow of a confidence in anything that you can do, or in anything that you can be, but look only to Him who God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin! This I do at this very moment—will you not do the same? Oh, may the sweet Spirit of God lead you, now, to trust in Jesus!

See, then, the love of God in putting it in so plainly—so easy a way. Oh, you broken, crushed and despairing sinner, you cannot work, but can you not believe that which is true? You cannot sigh, you can not cry. You cannot melt your stony heart, but can you not believe that Jesus died for you and that He can change that heart of yours and make you a new creature? If you can believe this, then trust in Jesus to do so and you are saved, for he that believes in Him is justified! "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." He is a saved man! His sins are forgiven! Let him go his way in peace and sin no more!

I admire, first, the love of God in the great Gift. And then in the great plan by which that Gift becomes available to guilty men.

III. Thirdly, the love of God shines forth with transcendent brightness in a third point, namely, in THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS PLAN IS AVAILABLE and for whom this Gift is given. They are described in these words—"Whoever believes in Him." There is, in the text, a word which has no limit—"God so loved the world." But then comes in the descriptive limit which I beg you to notice with care—"He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish." God did not so love the world that any man who does not believe in Christ shall be saved. Neither did God so give His Son that any man shall be saved who refuses to believe in Him. See how it is put—"God so loved the world, that He gave His onlybegotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish." Here is the compass of the love—while every unbeliever is excluded, every Believer is included. "Whoever believes in Him."

Suppose there is a man who has been guilty of all the lusts of the flesh to an infamous degree. Suppose that he is so detestable that he is only fit to be treated like a moral leper and shut up in a separate house for fear he should contaminate those who hear or see him. Yet if that man shall believe in Jesus Christ, he shall, at once, be made clean from his defilement and shall not perish because of his sin! And suppose there is another man who, in the pursuit of his selfish motives, has ground down the poor, has robbed his fellow traders and has even gone so far as to commit actual crimes of which the law of the land has taken cognizance. Yet if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be led to make restitution and his sins shall be forgiven him!

I once heard of a preacher addressing a company of men in chains who were condemned to die for murder and other crimes. They were such a drove of beasts, to all outward appearances, that it seemed hopeless to preach to them! Yet were I set to be chaplain to such a wretched company, I should not hesitate to tell them that, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son,

that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." O man, if you will believe in Jesus as the Christ, however horrible your past sins have been, they shall be blotted out! You shall be saved from the power of your evil habits and you shall begin, again, like a child, newly born, with a new and true life which God shall give you. "Whoever believes in Him"—that takes you in, my aged Friend, now lingering within a few tottering steps of the grave! O grayheaded Sinner, if you believe in Him, you shall not perish!

The text also includes you, dear Boy, who has scarcely entered your teens—if you believe in Him, you shall not perish. That takes you in, fair Maiden, and gives you hope and joy while yet young. That comprehends all of us, provided we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Neither can all the devils in Hell find any reason why the man that believes in Christ shall be lost, for it is written, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Do they say, "Lord, he has been so long in coming"? The Lord replies—"Has he come? Then I will not cast him out for all his delays." But, Lord, he went back after making a profession. "Has he, at last, come? Then I will not cast him out for all his backsliding." But, Lord, he was a foul-mouthed blasphemer! "Has he come to Me? Then I will not cast him out for all his blasphemies." But, says one, "I take exception to the salvation of this wicked wretch! He has behaved so abominably that in all justice he ought to be sent to Hell." Just so. But if he repents of his sin and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, whoever he may be, he shall not be sent there! He shall be changed in character so that he shall never perish, but have eternal life!

Now, observe, that this, "whoever," makes a grand sweep, for it encircles all degrees of faith. "Whoever believes in Him." It may be that he has no full assurance. It may be that he has no assurance at all! But if he has faith, true and childlike, by it he shall be saved. Though his faith is so little that I must put on my spectacles to see it, yet Christ will see it and reward it! His faith may be such a tiny grain of mustard seed that I look and look, again, but hardly discern it—and yet it brings him eternal life—and it is, itself, a living thing! The Lord can see, within that mustard seed, a tree among whose branches the birds of the air shall make their nests!

"My faith is feeble, I confess, I faintly trust Your Word. But will You pity me the less? Be that far from You, Lord!"

O Lord Jesus, if I cannot take You up in my arms as Simeon did, I will at least touch Your garment's hem as the poor diseased woman did to whom Your healing virtue flowed! It is written, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That means me! I cannot preach at length to you, tonight, but I would preach with strength! Oh that this Truth of God may soak into your souls! Oh, you that feel yourselves guilty, and you that feel guilty because you do not feel guilty—you that are broken in heart because your heart will not break—you that feel that you cannot feel! It is to you that I would preach salvation in Christ by faith! You groan because you cannot groan! But whoever you may be, you are still within the range of this mighty Word of God, that, "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Thus have I commended God's love to you in these three points—the Divine Gift, the Divine method of saving and the Divine choice of the persons to whom salvation comes.

IV. Now fourthly, another beam of Divine Love is to be seen in the negative blessing here stated, namely, in THE DELIVERANCE implied in the words, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish."

I understand that word to mean that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, though he is ready to perish. His sins would cause him to perish, but he shall never perish. At first, he has a little hope in Christ, but its existence is feeble. It will soon die out, will it not? No, his faith shall not perish, for this promise covers it—"Whoever believes in Him shall not perish." The penitent has believed in Jesus and, therefore, he has begun to be a Christian. "Oh," cries an enemy, "let him alone! He will soon be back among us. He will soon be as careless as ever." Listen! "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish" and, therefore, he will not return to his former state. This proves the final perseverance of the saints, for if the Believer ceased to be a Believer, he would perish. And as he cannot perish, it is clear that he will continue a Believer. If you believe in Jesus, you shall never leave off believing in Him, for that would be to perish! If you believe in Him, you shall never delight in your old sins, for that would be to perish. If you believe in Him, you shall never lose spiritual life. How can you lose that which is everlasting? If you were to lose it, it would prove that it were not everlasting and you would perish! And thus you would make this Word of God to be of no effect.

Whoever, with his heart, believes in Christ, is a saved man! Not only for tonight, but for all the nights that ever shall be—and for that dread night of death—and for that solemn eternity which draws so near. "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish," but he shall have a life that cannot die, a justification that cannot be disputed, an acceptance which shall never cease!

What is it to perish? It is to lose all hope in Christ, all trust in God, all light in life, all peace in death, all joy, all bliss, all union with God. This shall never happen to you if you believe in Christ! If you believe, you shall be chastened when you do wrong, for every child of God comes under discipline—and what son is there whom the father chastens not? If you believe, you may doubt and fear as to your state, as a man on board a ship may be tossed about, but you have gotten on board a ship that never can be wrecked! He that has union with Christ has union with Perfection, Omnipotence and Glory. He that believes is a member of Christ—will Christ lose His members? How should Christ be perfect if He lost even His little finger? Are Christ's members to rot off, or to be cut off? Impossible!

If you have faith in Christ you are a partaker of Christ's life and you cannot perish. If men were trying to drown me, they could not drown my foot as long as I had my head above water—and as long as our Head is above water, up yonder in the eternal sunshine, the least limb of His body can never be destroyed! He that believes in Jesus is united to Him and he must live because Jesus lives! Oh what a Word of God is this, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them to Me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

I feel that I have a grand Gospel to preach to you when I read that whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish! I would not give two pins for that trumpery, temporary salvation which some proclaim—which floats the soul, for a time, and then ebbs away to apostasy! I do not believe that the man who is once in Christ may live in sin and delight in it and yet be saved. That is abominable teaching and none of mine! But I do believe that the man who is in Christ will not live in sin, for he

is saved from it— nor will he return to his old sins and live in them, for the Grace of God will continue to save him from his sins. Such a change is worked, by regeneration, that the new-born man cannot live in sin, nor find comfort in it, but he loves holiness and makes progress in it.

The Ethiopian may change his skin and the leopard his spots, but only Divine Grace can work the change—and when Divine Grace has done the deed, the Blackamoor will remain white and the leopard's spots will never return. It would be as great a miracle to undo the work of God as to do it! And to destroy the new creation would require as great a power as to make it! If only God can create, so only God can destroy, and He will never destroy the work of His own hands. Will God begin to build and not finish? Will He commence a warfare and end it before He has won the victory? What would the devil say if Christ were to begin to save a soul and fail in the attempt? If there should come to be souls in Hell that were Believers in Christ and yet perished, it would cast a cloud upon the diadem of our exalted Lord! It cannot, shall not, be! Such is the love of God, that whoever believes in His dear Son shall not perish—in this assurance we greatly rejoice.

V. The last commendation of His love lies in the positive—IN THE POSSESSION. I shall have to go, in a measure, over the same ground again. Let me, therefore, be far shorter. God gives to every man that believes in Christ everlasting life. The moment you believe, there trembles into your bosom a vital spark of heavenly flame which never shall be quenched. In that same moment when you cast yourself on Christ, Christ comes to you in the living and incorruptible Word which lives forever. Though there should drop into your heart but one drop of the heavenly Water of Life, remember this—He who cannot lie, has said it —"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." When I first received everlasting life, I had no idea what a treasure had come to me! I knew that I had obtained something very extraordinary, but of its superlative value I was not aware. I did but look to Christ in the little chapel and I received eternal life! I looked to Jesus and He looked on me— and we were one forever! That moment my joy surpassed all bounds, just as my sorrow had, before, driven me to an extreme of grief.

I was perfectly at rest in Christ, satisfied with Him and my heart was glad—but I did not know that this Grace was everlasting life till I began to read in the Scriptures and to know more fully the value of the Jewel which God had given me. The next Sunday I went to the same chapel, as it was very natural that I should. But I never went again, for this reason, that during my first week, the new life that was in me had been compelled to fight for its existence and a conflict with the old nature had been vigorously carried on. This I knew to be a special token of the indwelling of Grace in my soul—but in that same chapel I heard a sermon upon, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the preacher declared that Paul was not a Christian when he had that experience! Babe as I was, I knew better than to believe so absurd a statement! What but Divine Grace could produce such sighs and cries after deliverance from indwelling sin?! I felt that a person who could talk such nonsense knew little of the life of a true Believer. I said to myself, "What? Am I not alive because I feel a conflict within me? I never felt this fight when I was an unbeliever! When I was not a Christian, I never groaned to be set free from sin! This conflict is one of the surest evidences of my new birth and yet this man cannot see it! He may be a good exhorter to sinners, but he cannot feed Believers." I resolved to go into that pasture no more, for I could not feed there.

I find that the struggle becomes more and more intense. Each victory over sin reveals another army of evil tendencies and I am never able to sheathe my sword, nor cease from prayer and watchfulness. I cannot advance an inch without praying my way, nor keep the inch I gain without watching and standing fast! Grace alone can preserve and perfect me! The old nature will kill the new nature if it can and, to this moment, the only reason why my new nature is not dead is this—because it cannot die! If it could have died, it would have been slain long ago. But Jesus said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life." "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." Therefore, the Believer cannot die! The only religion which will save you is one that you cannot leave because it possesses you and will not leave you! If you hold a doctrine which you can give up, give it up! But if the doctrines are burnt into you so that, as long as you live, you must hold them—and so that if you were burnt, every ash would hold that same truth in it because you are impregnated with it—then you have found the right thing!

You are not a saved man unless Christ has saved you forever. But that which has such a grip of you that its grasp is felt in the core of your being is the power of God! To have Christ living in you and the Truth of God ingrained in your very nature—O Sirs, this is the thing that saves the soul—and nothing short of it. It is written in the text, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What is this but a life that shall last through your three-score years and ten? A life that shall last you should you outlive a century? A life that will still flourish when you lie at the grave's mouth? A life that will abide when you have quit the body and left it rotting in the tomb? A life that will continue when your body is raised, again, and you shall stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ? A life that will outshine those stars and yon sun and moon? A life that shall be coeval with the life of the Eternal Father?

As long as there is a God, the Believer shall not only exist, but live! As long as there is a Heaven, you shall enjoy it! As long as there is a Christ, you shall live in His love! And as long as there is an eternity, you shall continue to fill it with delight! God bless you and help you to believe in Jesus. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 3:1-36.

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Chapter 96

John 3,18 #361 - None But Jesus--First Part

NONE BUT JESUS—FIRST PART

NO. 361

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 17, 1861,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"He that believes on Him is not condemned."

John 3:18.

THE way of salvation is stated in Scripture in the very plainest forms

and yet, perhaps, there is no Truth about which more errors have been uttered than concerning the faith which saves the soul. Well has it been proved by experience that all doctrines of Christ are mysteries—mysteries not so much in themselves but because they are hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world has blinded their eyes. So plain is Scripture that one may say, "He that runs may read," but so dim is man's eye and so marred is his understanding that the very simplest Truth of Scripture he distorts and misrepresents.

And indeed, my Brethren, even those who know what faith is, personally and experimentally, do not always find it easy to give a good definition of it. They think they have hit the mark and then afterwards they lament that they have failed. Straining themselves to describe some one part of faith, they find they have forgotten another and in the excess of their earnestness to clear the poor sinner out of one mistake, they often lead him into another. So that I think I may say while faith is the simplest thing in all the world, yet it is one of the most difficult upon which to preach, because from its very importance our soul begins to tremble while speaking of it and then we are not able to describe it so clearly as we would.

I intend this morning, by God's help, to put together sundry thoughts upon Faith, each of which I may have uttered in your hearing at different times but which have not been collected into one sermon before and which, I have no doubt, have been misunderstood from the want of their having been put together in their proper consecutive order. I shall speak a little on each of these points, first, the object of faith, to what it looks. Next, the reason of faith, from where it comes. Thirdly, the ground of faith, or what it wears when it comes. Fourthly, the warrant of faith, or why it dares to come to Christ. And fifthly, the result of faith, or, how it speeds when it does come to Christ.

I. First, then, THE OBJECT OF FAITH, or to what faith looks. I am told in the Word of God to believe—What am I to believe? I am bid

to look—to what am I to look? What is to be the object of my hope, belief and confidence? The reply is simple. The Object of Faith to a sinner is Christ Jesus. How many make a mistake about this and think that they are to believe on God the Father! Now belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son.

Many men say, "I would believe in Christ if I knew that I were elect." This is coming to the Father and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father's work to elect—you cannot come directly to Him—therefore you cannot know your election until first you have believed on Christ the Redeemer. And then through redemption you can apapproach the Father and know your election.

Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God the Holy Spirit. They look within to see if they have certain feelings and if they find them their faith is strong—but if their feelings have departed from them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit which is not the object of a sinner's faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption—but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon the blood of the Mediator is the only plea.

Christians have to trust the Spirit after conversion, but the sinner's business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus and to Him alone. I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity but yet the first and immediate object of a sinner's justifying faith is neither God the Father nor God the Holy Spirit, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh and offering atonement for sinners. Have you the eye of faith? Then, Soul, look to Christ as God. If you would be saved, believe Him to be God over all, blessed forever. Bow before Him and accept Him as being "Very God of very God." If you do not, you have no part in Him.

When you have thus believed, believe in him as man. Believe the wondrous story of His incarnation. Rely upon the testimony of the Evangelists who declare that the Infinite was robed in the infant, that the Eternal was concealed within the mortal, that He who was King of Heaven became a servant of servants and the Son of man. Believe and admire the mystery of His incarnation for unless you believe this, you cannot be saved. Then, especially, if you would be saved, let your faith behold Christ in His perfect righteousness.

See Him keeping the Law without blemish, obeying His Father without error, preserving His integrity without flaw. All this you are to consider as being done on your behalf. You could not keep the Law, He kept it for you. You could not obey God perfectly—His obedience stands in the place of your obedience—by it you are saved. But take care that your faith mainly fixes itself upon Christ as dying and as dead. View the Lamb of God as dumb before His shearers. View Him as the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Go with Him to Gethsemane and behold Him sweating drops of blood.

Mark, your faith has nothing to do with anything within yourself—the Object of your faith is nothing within you, but a something without you. Believe on Him then, who on yonder tree with nailed hands and feet pours out His life for sinners. There is the Object of your faith for justification. Not in yourself, nor in anything which the Holy Spirit has done in you, or anything He has promised to do

for you but you are to look to Christ and to Christ Jesus alone.

Then let your faith behold Christ rising from the dead. See Him—He has borne the curse and now He receives the justification. He dies to pay the debt. He rises that He may nail the handwriting of that discharged debt to the Cross. See Him ascending up on high and behold Him this day pleading before the Father's Throne. He is there pleading for His people— offering up today His authoritative petition for all that come to God by Him. And He, as God, as Man, as living, as dying, as rising and as reign

2Volume 7 ing above—He and He alone is to be the Object of your faith for the pardon of sin.

On nothing else must you trust. He is to be the only prop and pillar of your confidence and all you add thereunto will be a wicked antichrist, a rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. But take care that your faith saves you, that while you look to Christ in all these matters you view Him as being a Substitute. This doctrine of substitution is so essential to the whole plan of salvation that I must explain it here for the thousandth time. God is Just. He must punish sin. God is merciful. He wills to pardon those who believe in Jesus. How is this to be done? How can He be Just and exact the penalty—merciful—and accept the sinner?

He does it thus—He takes the sins of His people and actually lifts them up from off His people to Christ so that they stand as innocent as though they had never sinned and Christ is looked upon, by God, as though He had been all the sinners in the world robed into one. The sin of His people was taken from their persons and really and actually, not typically and metaphorically, but really and actually laid on Christ. Then God came forth with His fiery sword to meet the Sinner and to punish Him. He met Christ. Christ was not a sinner Himself, but the sins of His people were all imputed to Him. Justice, therefore, met Christ as though He had been the sinner—punished Christ for His people's sins—punished Him as far as its rights could go—exacted from Him the last atom of the penalty and left not a dreg in the cup.

And now he who can see Christ as being his Substitute and puts his trust in Him is thereby delivered from the curse of the Law. Soul, when you see Christ obeying the Law—your faith is to say, "He obeys that for His people." When you see Him dying, you are to count the purple drops and say, "Thus He took my sins away." When you see Him rising from the dead, you are to say—"He rises as the Head and Representative of all His elect," and when you see Him sitting at the right hand of God, you are to view Him there as the pledge that all for whom He died shall sit at the Father's right hand.

Learn to look on Christ as being in God's sight as though He were the sinner. "In Him was no sin." He was "the Just," but He suffered for the unjust. He was the Righteous but He stood in the place of the unrighteous and all that the unrighteous ought to have endured Christ has endured once and for all and put away their sins forever by the sacrifice of Himself.

Now this is the great Object of faith. I pray you, do not make any mistake about this, for a mistake here will be dangerous, if not fatal. View Christ, by your faith, as being in His life and death and sufferings and resurrection the Substitute for all whom His Father gave Him—the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all those who will trust Him with their souls. Christ, then, thus set forth, is the Object of justifying faith.

Now let me further remark that there are some of you, no doubt, saying—"Oh, I should believe and I should be saved if"—if what? If Christ had died? "Oh no, Sir, my doubt is nothing about Christ." I thought so. Then what is the doubt? "Why, I should believe if I felt this, or if I had done that." Just so. But I tell you, you could not believe in Jesus if you felt that, or if you had done that, for then you would believe in yourself and not in Christ. That is the English of it. If you were so-and-so, or so-and-so, then you could have confidence. Confidence in what? Why, confidence in your feelings and confidence in your doings and isn't that the contrary of fidence in Christ?

Faith is not to infer from something good within me that I shall be saved. But it is to say that despite the fact that I am guilty in the sight of God and deserve His wrath, yet I do nevertheless believe that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans me from all sin. And though my present consciousness condemns me, yet my faith overpowers my consciousness and I believe that, "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."

To come to Christ as a saint is very easy work. To trust a doctor to cure you when you believe you are getting better, is very easy. But to trust your physician when you feel as if the sentence of death were in your body, to bear up when the disease is rising into the very skin and when the ulcer is gathering its venom—to believe even then in the efficacy of the medicine— that is faith. And so, when sin gets the mastery of you—when you feel that the Law condemns you—then, even then, as a sinner, to trust Christ—this is the most daring feat in all the world—and the faith which shook down the walls of Jericho.

The faith which raised the dead—the faith which stopped the mouths of libels—was not greater than that of a poor sinner, when in the teeth of all his sins he dares to trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Do this, Soul, then you are saved, whosoever you may be. The Object of faith, then, is Christ as the Substitute for sinners. God in Christ, but not God apart from Christ, nor any work of the Spirit, but the work of Jesus alone must be viewed by you as the foundation of your hope.

II. And now, secondly, THE REASON OF FAITH, or why does any man believe and from where does his faith come?

"Faith comes by hearing." Granted, but do not all men hear and do not many still remain unbelieving? How, then, does any man come by his faith? To his own experience his faith comes as the result of a sense of need. He feels himself needing a Savior. He finds Christ to be just such a Savior as he wants and therefore because he cannot help himself, he believes in Jesus. Having nothing of his own, he feels he must take Christ or else perish and therefore he does it because he cannot help doing it. He is fairly driven up into a corner and there is but this one way of escape, namely, by the righteousness of Another.

He feels he cannot escape by any good deeds, or sufferings of his own and he comes to Christ and humbles himself, because he cannot do without Christ and must perish unless he lay hold of Him. But to carry the question further back, where does that man get his sense of need? How is it that he, rather than others, feels his need of Christ? It is certain he has no more necessity for Christ than other men. How does he come to know, then, that he is lost and ruined? How is it that he is driven by the sense of ruin to take hold on Christ the Restorer?

The reply is—this is the gift of God. This is the work of the Spirit. No man comes to Christ except the Spirit draw him and the Spirit draws men to Christ by shutting them up under the Law to a conviction that if they do not come to Christ they must perish. Then by sheer stress of weather they tack about and run into this heavenly port. Salvation by Christ is so disagreeable to our carnal mind, so inconsistent with our love of human

4Volume 7 merit that we never would take Christ to be our All in all if the Spirit did not convince us that we were nothing at all and did not so compel us to lay hold on Christ.

But then, the question goes further back still—how is it that the Spirit of God teaches some men their need and not other men? Why is it that some of you were driven by your sense of need to Christ while others go on in their self-righteousness and perish? There is no answer to be given but this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." It comes to divine sovereignty at the last. The Lord has "hidden those things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes." According to the way in which Christ put it—"My sheep hear My voice," "you believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you."

Some Divines would like to read that—"You are not My sheep, because you do not believe." As if believing made us the sheep of Christ. But the text puts it—"You believe not, because you are not of My sheep." "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." If they come not, it is a clear proof that they were never given. For those who were given of old eternity to Christ, chosen by God the Father and then redeemed by God the Son— these are led by the Spirit through a sense of need to come and lay hold on Christ. No man yet ever did or ever will believe in Christ unless he feels his need of Him. No man ever did or will feel his need of Christ unless the Spirit makes him feel and the Spirit will make no man feel his need of Jesus savingly unless it be so written in that eternal book—in which God has surely engraved the names of His elect.

So then, I think I am not to be misunderstood on this point—that the reason of faith—or why men believe, is God's electing love working through the Spirit by a sense of need and so bringing them to Christ Jesus.

III. But now I shall want your careful attention while I come to another point upon which you, perhaps, will think I contradict myself. And that is—THE GROUND OF THE SINNER'S FAITH—or on what ground does he dare to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear Friends, I have already said that no man will believe in Jesus unless he feels his need of Him. But you have often heard me say and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of Him. My reason for believing in Christ, is not that I feel my need of Him, but that I have a need of Him. The ground on which a man comes to Jesus is not as a sensible sinner, but as a sinner and nothing but a sinner. He will not come unless he is awakened, but when he comes, he does not say, "Lord, I come to you because I am an awakened sinner, save me."

But he says, "Lord, I am a sinner, save me." Not his awakening, but his sinnership is the method and plan upon which he dares to come. You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean for I cannot exactly explain myself just now. If I refer to the preaching of a great many Calvinistic Divines, they say to a sinner, "Now, if you feel your need of Christ, if you have repented so much, if you have been harrowed by the Law to such-and-such a degree—then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner." I say that is false.

No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner. He must come to Him as a sinner. When I come to Jesus I know I am not come unless I am awakened, but still, I do not come as an awakened sinner. I do not stand at the foot of His Cross to be washed because I have repented. I bring nothing when I come, but sin. A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the Cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings. I believe in Him whether I have good feelings or not—

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

Mr. Roger, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Flavell and several excellent Divines in the Puritan age and especially Richard Baxter used to give descriptions of what a man must feel before he may dare to come to Christ. Now, I say in the language of good Mr. Fenner, father of those Divines, who said he was but a babe in grace when compared with them—"I dare to say it that all this is not Scriptural. Sinners do feel these things before they come, but they do not come on the ground of having felt it. They come on the ground of being sinners and on no other ground whatever." The gate of Mercy is opened and over the door it is written, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Between that word "save" and the next word "sinners," there is no adjective. It does not say, "penitent sinners," "awakened sinners," "sensible sinners," "grieving sinners" or "alarmed sinners." No, it only says, "sinners." And I know this—that when I come I come to Christ today—for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the Cross of Christ today as it was to come ten years ago—when I come to Him I dare not come as a conscious sinner or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands.

I saw an aged man this week in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect. The old man had been a Christian for years and he said, "I never saw it put exactly so, but still I know that is just the way I come. I say, 'Lord—

"Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Your Cross I cling; Naked, look to You for dress; Helpless, come to You for grace; Black—("Black enough," said the old man) I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior, or I die."

Faith is getting right out of yourself and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, "if you feel your need, you may come to Christ." "But," say they, "I do not feel my need enough. I am sure I do not." Many a score of letters have I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, "I would venture to believe in Christ to save me if I had a tender conscience. If I had a soft heart—but oh, my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt. I cannot feel as I would like to feel and therefore I must not believe in Jesus."

Oh, down with it, down with it! It is a wicked anti-Christ. It is flat Popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe. You are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart and come to Him with nothing

6Volume 7 about you but sin. The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black with sin. That he is dead and not that he knows he is dead. That he is lost and not that he knows he is

lost. I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes. It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground which he understands.

Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I thought I will not feel enough. And I used to read that hymn of Cowper's about being insensible as steel—

"If anything is felt 'tis only pain To find I cannot feel."

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. Now when I look back I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely and most of all because I thought I did not feel. Generally the people who repent the most think they are impenitent—and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all. We are no judge of our feelings and hence the Gospel invitation is not put upon the ground of anything of which we can be a judge. It is put on the ground of our being sinners and nothing but sinners.

"Well," says one, "but it says, 'Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest'—then we must be weary and heavyladen." Just so. So it is in that text, but then there is another. "Whosoever will, let him come." And that does not say anything about "weary and heavy-laden." Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden you will perceive that the promise is not made to them as weary and heavy-laden but it is made to them as coming to Christ.

They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came. They thought they were not. They really were, but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be and part of their load was that they did not feel their load enough. They came to Christ just as they were and He saved them—not because there was any merit in their weariness, or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden— He saved them as sinners and nothing but sinners and so they were washed in His blood and made clean. My dear Hearer, do let me put this Truth home to you. If you will come to Christ this morning, as nothing but a sinner, He will not cast you out.

Old Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons upon this very point, "I dare to say it but if you do come to Christ, whosoever you may be, if He does not receive you then He is not true to His word, for He says, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.' If you come, never mind qualification or preparation. He needs no qualification of duties or of feelings either. You are to come just as you are and if you are the biggest sinner out of Hell, you are as fit to come to Christ as if you were the most moral and most excellent of men. There is a bath—who is fit to be washed? A man's blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he should be."

When our City magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, "I am so poor, therefore I am not fit to have relief." Your poverty is your preparation, the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All He asks is that you will come empty. If you have anything of your own you must leave all before you come. If there is anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ—you must come with nothing in your hand. Take Him as All in all and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved— as a sinner and nothing but a sinner.

IV. But not to stay longer, my fourth point has to do with THE WARRANT OF FAITH, or why a man dares to trust in Christ.

Is it not imprudent for any man to trust Christ to save him and especially when he has no good thing whatever? Is it not an arrogant presumption for any man to trust Christ? No, Sirs, it is not. It is a grand and noble work of God the Holy Spirit. For He makes a man admit his sins and still to believe and set to his seal that God is true and believe in the return of the blood of Jesus. But why does any man dare to believe in Christ, I will ask you now. "Well," says one man, "I summoned faith to believe in Christ because I did feel there was a work of the Spirit in me." You do not believe in Christ at all. "Well," says another, "I thought that I had a right to believe in Christ, because I felt somewhat." You had not any right to believe in Christ at all on such a warrant as that.

What is a man's warrant, then, for believing in Christ? Here it is. Christ tells him to do it—that is his warrant. Christ's Word is the warrant of the sinner for believing in Christ—not what he feels nor what he is, nor what he is not—but that Christ has told him to do it. The Gospel runs thus: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." Faith in Christ, then, is a commanded duty as well as a blessed privilege and what a mercy it is that it is a duty—because there never can be any question but that a man has a right to do his duty.

Now on the ground that God commands me to believe, I have a right to believe, be I who I may. The Gospel is sent to every creature. Well, I belong to that tribe, I am one of the every creatures and that Gospel commands me to believe and I do it. I cannot have done wrong in doing it for I was commanded to do so. I cannot be wrong in obeying a command of God. Now it is a command of God given to every creature that he should believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent. This is your warrant, Sinner. And a blessed warrant it is. For it is one which Hell cannot gainsay and which Heaven cannot withdraw.

You need not be looking within to look for the misty warrants of your experience. You need not be looking to your works or to your feelings to get some dull and insufficient warrant for your confidence in Christ. You may believe Christ because He tells you to do so. That is a sure ground to stand on and one which admits of no doubt. I will suppose that we are all starving, that the city is by sin besieged and shut up and there has been a long, long famine and we are ready to die of hunger. There comes out an invitation to us to repair at once to the palace of some great one there to eat and drink, but we have grown foolish and will not accept the invitation.

Suppose now that some hideous madness has got hold of us and we prefer to die and had rather starve than come. Suppose the king's herald should say, "Come and feast, poor hungry souls and because I know you are unwilling to come, I add this threat, if you come not my warriors shall be upon you. They shall make you feel the sharpness of their swords." I think, my dear Friends, we should say, "We bless the great man for that

8Volume 7 threat because now we need not say, 'I may not come,' while the fact is we have to go or die. Now I need not say I am not fit to come for I am commanded to come and I am threatened if I do not come. And I will even go."

That awful sentence—"He that believes not shall be damned" was added not out of anger, but because the Lord knew our silly madness and that we should refuse our own mercies unless He thundered at us to make us come to the feast, "Compel then to come in." This was the Word of the Master of old and that text is part of the carrying out of that exhortation, "Compel them to come in." Sinner, you cannot be lost by trusting Christ, but you will be lost if you do not trust Him. Yes and

lost for not trusting Him. I put it boldly now—Sinner, not only may you come, but oh! I pray you, do not defy the wrath of God by refusing to come. The gate of mercy stands wide open. Why will you not come? Why will you not? Why so proud? Why will you still refuse His voice and perish in your sins?

Mark, if you perish, any one of you, your blood lies not at God's door, nor Christ's door, but at your own. He can say of you, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Oh, poor Trembler, if you are willing to come, there is nothing in God's Word to keep you from coming, but there are both threats to drive you and powers to draw you. Still I hear you say, "I must not trust Christ." You may, I say, for every creature under Heaven is commanded to do it and what you are commanded to do, you may do.

"Ah! well," says one, "still I do not feel that I may." There you go again, you say you will not do what God tells you, because of some stupid feelings of your own. You are not told to trust Christ because you feel anything, but simply because you are a sinner. Now you know you are a sinner. "I am," says one, "and that is my sorrow." Why your sorrow? That is some sign that you do feel. "Yes," says one, "but I do not feel enough and that is why I sorrow. I do not feel as I should." Well, suppose you do feel, or suppose you do not, you are a sinner and "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"Oh, but I am such an old sinner, I have been sixty years in sin." Where is it written that after sixty you cannot be saved? Sir, Christ could save you at a hundred—yes, if you were a Methuselah in guilt. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin." "Whosoever will, let him come." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come onto God by Him." "Yes," says one, "but I have been a drunkard, a swearer, or lascivious, or profane." Then you are a sinner. You have not gone further than the uttermost. He is able to save you still. "Yes," says another, "but you do not know how my guilt has been aggravated."

That only proves you to be a sinner and that you are commanded to trust Christ and be saved. "Yes," cries yet another, "but you do not know how often I have rejected Christ." Yes, but that only makes you the more a sinner. "You do not know how hard my heart is." Just so, but that only proves you to be a sinner and still proves you to be one whom Christ came to save. "Oh, but, Sir, I have not any good thing. If I had, you know, I should have something to encourage me." The fact of your not having any good thing just proves to me that you are the man I am sent to preach to.

Christ came to save that which was lost and all you have said only proves that you are lost and therefore He came to save you. Trust Him. Trust Him. "But if I am saved," says one, "I shall be the biggest sinner that ever was saved." Then the greater music in Heaven when you get there, the more glory to Christ—for the bigger the sinner, the more honor for Christ when at last he shall be brought home. "Yes, but my sin has abounded." His grace shall much more abound. "But my sin has reached even to Heaven." Yes, but His grace reaches above the heavens.

"Oh, that my guilt is as broad as the world." Yes, but His righteousness is broader than a thousand worlds. "Yes, but my sin is scarlet." Yes, but His blood is more scarlet than your sins and can wash the scarlet out by a richer scarlet. "Yes, but I deserve to be lost and death and Hell cry for my damnation." Yes and so they may, but the blood of Jesus Christ can cry louder than either death or Hell. And it cries today, "Father, let the sinner live." Oh, I wish I could get this thought out of my

own mouth and get it into your heads—that when God saves you, it is not because of anything in you. It is because of something in Himself. God's love has no reason except in His own head. God's reason for pardoning a sinner is found in His own heart and not in the sinner. And there is as much reason in you why you should be saved as why another should be saved, namely, no reason at all. There is no reason in you why He should have mercy on you but there is no reason wanted—for the reason lies in God and in God alone.

V. And now I come to the conclusion and I trust you will have patience with me, for my last point is a very glorious one and full of joy to those souls who as sinners dare to believe in Christ—THE RESULT OF FAITH— or how it speeds when it comes to Christ.

The text says, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." There is a man here who has just this moment believed. He is not condemned. But he has been fifty years in sin and has plunged into all manner of vice. His sins, which are many, are all forgiven him. He stands in the sight of God now as innocent as though he had never sinned. Such is the power of Jesus' blood, that "he that believes is not condemned." Does this relate to what is to happen at the day of Judgment? I pray you look at the text and you will find it does not say, "He that believes on Him shall not be condemned," but he is not. He is not now. And if he is not now, then it follows that he never shall be. For having believed in Christ that promise still stands, "He that believes on Him is not condemned."

I believe today I am not condemned. In fifty years time that promise will be just the same—"He that believes on Him is not condemned." So that the moment a man puts his trust in Christ he is freed from all condemnation—past, present and to come—and from that day he stands in God's sight as though he were without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. "But he sins," you say. He does indeed, but his sins are not laid to his charge. They were laid to the charge of Christ of old and God shall never charge the offense on two—first on Christ and then on the sinner.

"Yes, but he often falls into sin." That may be possible—though if the Spirit of God is in him he sins not as he once did. He sins by reason of infirmity—not by reason of his love to sin—for now he hates it. But mark, you shall put it in your own way if you will and I will answer, "Yes, but though he sin, yet is he no more guilty in the sight of God, for all his guilt has been taken from him and put on Christ—positively, literally and actually lifted off from him and put upon Jesus Christ."

10 Volume 7 Do you see the Jewish host? There is a scapegoat brought out. The high priest confesses the sin of the people over the scapegoat's head. The sin is all gone from the people and laid upon the scapegoat. Away goes the scapegoat into the wilderness. Is there any sin left on the people? If there is, then the scapegoat has not carried it away. Because it cannot be here and there, too. It cannot be carried away and left behind too.

"No," you say, "Scripture says the scapegoat carried away the sin. There was none left on the people when the scapegoat had taken away the sin." And so, when by faith we put our hand upon the head of Christ, does Christ take away our sin, or does He not? If He does not, then it is of no use our believing in Him. But if He does really take away our sin, our sin cannot be on Him and on us, too. If it is on Christ, we are free, clear, accepted, justified and this is the true doctrine of justification by faith. As soon as a man believes in Christ Jesus, his sins are gone from him and gone away forever. They are blotted out forever.

What if a man owes a hundred pounds, yet if he has got a receipt for it, he is free, it is blotted out, there is an erasure made in the book and the debt is gone. Though the man commit sin yet the debt having been paid before even the debt was acquired, he is no more a debtor to the Law of God. Does not Scripture say that God has cast His people's sins into the depths of the sea? Now, if they are in the depths of the sea, they cannot be on His people. Blessed be His name, in the day when He cast our sins into the depth of the sea He views us as pure in His sight and we stand accepted in the Beloved.

Then He says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." They cannot be removed and be here still. Then if you believe in Christ, you are no more in the sight of God a sinner, you are accepted as though you were perfect, as though you had kept the Law—for Christ has kept it and His righteousness is yours. You have broken it, but your sin is His and He has been punished for it. Mistake not yourselves any longer—you are no more what you were. When you believe you stand in Christ's place even as Christ of old stood in yours. The transformation is complete. The exchange is positive and eternal. They who believe in Jesus are as much accepted of God the Father as even His Eternal Son is accepted and they that believe not, let them do what they will, they shall but go about to work out their own righteousness, but they abide under the Law and still shall they be under the curse.

Now, you that believe in Jesus walk up and down the earth in the glory of this great Truth. You are sinners in yourselves but you are washed in the blood of Christ. David says, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." You have lately seen the snow come down—how clear! How white! What could be whiter? Why, the Christian is whiter than that. You say, "He is black." I know he is as black as anyone—as black as Hell—but the blood drop falls on him and he is as white—"whiter than snow." The next time you see the snow-white crystals falling from Heaven, look on them and say, "Ah! though I must confess within myself that I am unworthy and unclean, yet, believing in Christ, He has given me His righteousness so completely that I am even whiter than the snow as it descends from the treasury of God." Oh, for faith to lay hold on this! Oh, for an overpowering faith that shall get the victory over doubts and fears and make us enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free! Go home, you that believe in Christ— go to your beds this night and say, "If I die in my bed I cannot be condemned." Should you wake the next morning, go into the world and say, "I am not condemned!" When the devil howls at you, tell him, "Ah, you may accuse, but I am not condemned."

And if sometimes your sins rise—say, "Yes, I know you, but you are all gone forever. I am not condemned." And when your turn shall come to die, shut your eyes in peace—

"Bold shall you stand in that great day, For who anything to your charge can lay?"

Fully absolved by grace you shall be found at last and all sin's tremendous curse and blame shall be taken away, not because of anything you have done.

I pray you to do all you can for Christ out of gratitude, but even when you have done all, do not rest there. Rest still in the Substitution and the Sacrifice. Be what Christ was in His Father's sight and when conscience awakens, you can tell it that Christ was for you all that you ought to have been—that He has suffered all your penalty and now neither mercy nor justice can smite you, since justice has clasped hands with mercy in a firm decree to save that man whose faith is in the

Cross of Christ. The Lord bless these words for His sake. Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

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Chapter 97

John 3,18 #362 - None But Jesus--Second Part

NONE BUT JESUS—SECOND PART

NO. 362

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, FEBRUARY 17, 1861,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET, SOUTHWARK.

"He that believes on Him is not condemned."

John 3:18.

IN the morning sermon our time was mainly taken up with the description of Faith—what it is. We had only a few minutes left at its close to describe what it leads to—the privilege of justification which is a gift to the soul as the result of Faith. Let this high privilege, then, occupy our attention tonight. The text says, "He that believes on Him—(that is on Christ Jesus)—is not condemned."

To take up the subject in order, we shall notice first the satisfactory declaration here made. Secondly, we shall endeavor to correct certain misapprehensions respecting it, by reason of which the Christian is often cast down. We shall close with some reflections, positive and negative, as to what this text includes and what it excludes.

1. First of all, then, WHAT A SATISFACTORY DECLARATION!—"He that believes on Him is not condemned."

You are aware that in our courts of law a verdict of "not guilty" amounts to an acquittal and the prisoner is immediately discharged. So is it in the language of the Gospel. A sentence of "not condemned" implies the justification of the sinner. It means that the believer in Christ receives now a present justification. Faith does not produce its fruits by-and-by, but now. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ and accepts Him as its All-inAll.

Are they who stand before the Throne of God justified tonight?—So are we—as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white and sing His praises above. The thief upon the Cross was justified the moment that he turned the eye of faith to Jesus who was just then, hanging by his side—and Paul, the aged, after years of service was not more justified than was the thief with no service at all. We are today accepted in the Beloved, today absolved from sin, today innocent in the sight of God. Oh, ravishing, soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of this vine which we shall not be able to gather till we go to Heaven, but this is one of the first ripe clusters and may be plucked and eaten here.

This is not as the corn of the land which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan. But this is part of the manna in the wilderness and part, too, of our daily raiment with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are now—even now pardoned. Even now are our sins put away. Even now we stand in the sight of God as though we had never been guilty—innocent as father Adam when he stood in integrity—before he had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree, pure as though we had never received the taint of depravity in our veins.

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There is not a sin in the Book of God, even now, against one of His people. There is nothing laid to their charge. There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth.

But to continue, the text evidently means not simply present, but continual justification. In the moment when you and I believed it was said of us, "He is not condemned." Many days have passed since then, many changes we have seen. But it is as true of us tonight—"He is not condemned." The Lord alone knows how long our appointed day shall be— how long before we shall fulfill the hireling's time and like a shadow flee away. But this we know—since every Word of God is assured and the gifts of God are without repentance—though we should live another fifty years, yet would it still be written here, "He that believes on Him is not condemned."

No, if by some mysteries dealing in Providence our lives should be lengthened out to ten times the usual limit of man and we should come to the eight or nine hundred years of Methuselah, still would it stand the same— "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." "The just shall live by faith." "He that believes on Him shall never be confounded." All these promises go to show that the justification which Christ gives to our faith is a continual one which will last as long as we shall live.

And remember, it will last in eternity as well as in time. We shall not in Heaven wear any other garment but that which we wear here. Today the righteous stand clothed in the righteousness of Christ. They shall wear this same wedding dress at the great wedding feast. But what if it should wear out? What if that righteousness should lose its virtue in the eternity to come? Oh Beloved, we entertain no fear about that! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this righteousness shall never wax old. No moth shall eat it. No thief shall steal it. No weeping hand of lamentation shall rend it in two.

It is, it must be, eternal—even as Christ Himself—Jehovah our righteousness. Because He is our righteousness, the self-existent, the everlasting, the immutable Jehovah, of whose years there is no end and whose strength fails not, therefore of our righteousness there is no end. And of its perfection and of its beauty there shall never be any termination. The text, I think, very clearly teaches us that he who believes on Christ has received forever a continual justification.

Again—think for a moment—the justification which is spoken of here is complete. "He that believes on Him is not condemned"—that is to say not in any measure or in any degree. I know some think it is possible for us to be in such a state as to be half-condemned and half-accepted. So far as we are sinners so far condemned and so far as we are righteous so far acaccepted. Oh Beloved, there is nothing like that in Scripture. It is altogether apart from the doctrine of the Gospel. If it is of

works, it is no more of grace and if it is of grace, it is no more of works.

Works and grace cannot mix and mingle any more than fire and water. It is either one or the other, it cannot be both. The two can never be allied. There can be no admixture of the two, no dilution of one with the other. He that believes is free from all iniquity, from all guilt, from all blame. And though the devil bring an accusation, yet it is a false one, for we are free even from accusation, since it is boldly challenged, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It does not say, "Who shall prove it?" but "Who shall lay it to their charge?"

They are so completely freed from condemnation that not the shadow of a spot upon their soul is found. Not even the slightest passing by of iniquity to cast its black shadow on them. They stand before God not only as half-innocent, but as perfectly so. Not only as half-washed, but as whiter than snow. Their sins are not simply erased, they are blotted out—not simply put out of sight, but cast into the depths of the sea. Not merely gone and gone as far as the east is from the west—but gone forever, once and for all. You know, Beloved, that the Jew in his ceremonial purification never finds his conscience free from sin. After one sacrifice he needed still another, for these offerings could never make the comers thereunto perfect.

The next day's sins needed a new lamb and the next year's iniquity needed a new victim for an atonement. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God." No more burnt-offerings are needed. No more washing, no more blood, no more atonement, no more sacrifice. "It is finished!" hear the dying Savior cry. Your sins have sustained their death-blow, the robe of your righteousness has received its last thread. It is done, complete, perfect. It needs no addition. It can never suffer any diminution.

Oh, Christian, lay hold of this precious thought!. I may not be able to state it except in weak terms, but let not my weakness prevent your apprehending its glory and its preciousness. It is enough to make a man leap, though his legs were loaded with irons and to make him sing though his mouth were gagged, to think that we are perfectly accepted in Christ, that our justification is impartial. It does not go to a limited extent, but goes the whole way. Our unrighteousness is covered. From condemnation we are entirely and irrevocably free once more.

The non-condemnation is effectual. The royal privilege of justification shall never miscarry. It shall be brought home to every believer. In the reign of King George the Third, the son of a member of this Church lay under sentence of death for forgery. My predecessor, Dr. Rippon, after incredible exertions obtained a promise that his sentence should be remitted. By a singular occurrence the present senior deacon—then a young man—learned from the governor of the jail that the reprieve had not been

Volume 7 3received. And the unhappy prisoner would have been executed the next morning had not Dr. Rippon gone post-haste to Windsor, obtained an interview with the king in his bed-chamber and received from the monarch's own hand a copy of that reprieve which had been negligently put aside by a thoughtless officer.

"I charge you, Doctor," said his majesty, "to make good speed." "Trust me, Sire, for that," responded your old pastor and he returned to London in time, just in time and only just in time, for the prisoner was being marched with many others on to the scaffold. Yes, that pardon might have been given and yet the man might have been executed if it had not been effectually carried out.

But blessed be God our non-condemnation is an effectual thing. It is not a matter of letter. It is a matter of fact.

Ah, poor Souls, you know that condemnation is a matter of fact. When you and I suffered in our souls and were brought under the heavy hand of the Law we felt that its curses were no mock thunders like the wrath of the Vatican, but they were real. We felt that the anger of God was indeed a thing to tremble at. A real substantial fact. Now, just as real as the condemnation which Justice brings, just so real is the justification which Mercy bestows. You are not only nominally guiltless, but you are really so, if you believe in Christ. You are not only nominally put into the place of the innocent, but you are really put there the moment you believe in Jesus.

Not only is it said that your sins are gone, but they are gone. Not only does God look on you as though you were accepted, you are accepted. It is a matter of fact to you, as much a matter of fact as that you sinned. You do not doubt that you have sinned, you cannot doubt that—do not doubt, then, that when you believe your sins are put away. For as certain as ever the black spot fell on you when you sinned, so certainly and so surely was it all washed out when you were bathed in that fountain filled with blood which was drawn from Emanuel's veins.

Come, my Soul, think of this! You are actually and effectually cleared from guilt. You are led out of your prison. You are no more in fetters as a bond-slave. You are delivered now from the bondage of the Law. You are freed from sin and you can walk at large as a free man. Your Savior's blood has procured your full discharge. Come, my Soul—you have a right now to come to your Father's feet. No flames of vengeance are there to scare you now. No fiery sword. Justice cannot smite the innocent. Come, my Soul, your disabilities are taken away. You were unable once to see your Father's face. You can see it now. You could not speak with Him, nor He with you. But now you have access with boldness to this grace wherein we stand.

Once there was a fear of Hell upon you. There is no Hell for you now. How can there be punishment for the guiltless? He that believes is guiltless, is not condemned and cannot be punished. No frowns of an avenging God now. If God is viewed as a Judge, how should He frown upon the guiltless? How should the Judge frown upon the absolved one? More than all the privileges you might have enjoyed if you had never sinned are yours now that you are justified. All the blessings which you would have had if you had kept the Law and more are yours tonight because Christ has kept it for you. All the love and the acceptance which a perfectly obedient being could have obtained of God belong to you, because Christ was perfectly obedient on your behalf and has imputed all His merits to your account that you might be exceeding rich through Him, who for your sake became exceedingly poor.

Oh that the Holy Spirit would but enlarge our hearts—that we might suck sweetness out of these thoughts! There is no condemnation. Moreover, there never shall be any condemnation. The forgiveness is not partial, but perfect. It is so effectual that it delivers us from all the penalties of the Law, gives to us all the privileges of obedience and puts us actually high above where we should have been had we never sinned. It fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. We are not now where Adam was, for Adam might fall and perish.

We are rather where Adam would have been if we could suppose God had put him into the garden for seven years and said, "If you are obedient for seven years, your time of probation shall be over

and I will reward you." The children of God in one sense may be said to be in a state of probation—in another sense there is no probation. There is no probation as to whether the child of God should be saved. He is saved already. His sins are washed away—his righteousness is complete—and if that righteousness could endure a million year's probation, it would never be defiled. In fact, it always stands the same in the sight of God and must do so forever and ever.

II. Let me now endeavor to CORRECT SOME MISAPPREHENSIONS BY REASON OF WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE OFTEN CAST DOWN.

What simpletons we are! Whatever our natural age, how childish we are in spiritual things! What great simpletons we are when we first believe in Christ! We think that our being pardoned involves a great many things which we afterwards find have nothing whatever to do with our pardon. For instance, we think we shall never sin again. We fancy that the battle is all fought. That we have got into a fair field with no more war to wage— that we have got the victory and have only just to stand up and wave the palm branch. That all is over, that God has only got to call us up to Himself and we shall enter into Heaven without having to fight any enemies upon earth.

Now, all these are obvious mistakes. Though the text has a great meaning, it does not mean anything of this kind. Observe that although it does assert, "He that believes is not condemned," it does not say that he that believes shall not have his faith exercised. Your faith will be exercised. An untried faith will be no faith at all. God never gave men faith without intending to try it. Faith is received for the very purpose of endurance. Just as our Rifle Corps friends put up the target with the intention of shooting at it, so does God give faith with the intention of letting trials and troubles and sin and Satan aim all their darts at it.

Volume 7 5When you have faith in Christ it is a great privilege. But recollect that it involves a great trial. You asked for great faith the other night—did you consider that you asked for great troubles, too? You cannot have great faith to lay up and rust. Mr. Great-Heart in John Bunyan's Pilgrim was a very strong man but then what strong work he had to do. He had to go with all those women and children many scores of times up to the Celestial City and back again. He had to fight all the giants and drive back all the lions, to slay the giant Slay-Good and knock down the Castle of Despair.

If you have a great measure of faith, you will have need to use it all. You will never have a single scrap to spare. You will be like the virgins in our Lord's parable—even though you are a wise virgin—you will have to say to others who might borrow of you, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and for you." But when your faith is exercised with trials, do not think you are brought into judgment for your sins. Oh, no, Believer, there is plenty of exercise, but that is not condemnation. There are many trials, but still we are justified. We may often be buffeted but we are never accursed. We may oftentimes be cast down but the sword of the Lord never can and never will smite us to the heart.

Yet more—not only may our faith be exercised but our faith may come to a very low ebb and still we are not be condemned. When your faith gets so small that you can not see it, even then you still are not condemned. If you have ever believed in Jesus, your faith may be like the sea when it goes out a very long way from the shore and leaves a vast track of mud and some might say the sea was gone or dried up—but you are still not condemned when your faith is almost dried up. Yes! and I dare to say it— when your faith is at the flood-tide, you are not more accepted then,

than when your faith is at the lowest ebb.

Your acceptance does not depend upon the quantity of your faith—it only depends upon its reality. If you are really resting in Christ, though your faith may be but as a spark and a thousand devils may try to quench that one spark, yet you are not condemned—you shall stand accepted in Christ. Though your comforts will necessarily decay as your faith declines, yet your acceptance does not decay. Though faith does rise and fall like the thermometer, though faith is like the mercury in the bulb, all weathers change it—yet God's love is not affected by the weather of earth, or the changes of time. Until the perfect righteousness of Christ can be a mutable thing—a football to be kicked about by the fleet of fiends—your acceptance with God can never change. You are, you must be perfectly accepted in the Beloved.

There is another thing which often tries the child of God. He at times loses the light of his Father's countenance. Now, remember, the text does not say, "He that believes shall not lose the light of God's countenance." He may do so, but he shall not be condemned for all that. You may walk, not only for days, but for months in such a state that you have little fellowship with Christ, very little communion with God of a joyous sort. The promises may seem broken to you, the Bible may afford you but little comfort. And when you turn your eye to Heaven you may only have to feel more of the smarting that is caused by your Father's rod. You may have vexed and grieved His Spirit and He may have turned away His face from you. But you are not condemned for all that.

Mark the testimony—"He that believes is not condemned." Even when your Father smites you and leaves a welt at every stroke and brings the blood at every blow—there is not a particle of condemnation in any one stroke. Not in His anger, but in His dear Covenant love He smites you. There is an unmixed and unalloyed affection in every love-stroke of chastisement from your Father's hand as there is in the kisses of Jesus Christ's lips. Oh, believe this—it will tend to lift up your heart—it will cheer you when neither sun nor moon appear!

It will honor your God. It will show you where your acceptance really lies. When His face is turned away believe Him still and say, "He abides faithful though He hides His face from me." I will go a little further still. The child of God may be so assaulted by Satan that he may be well-nigh given up to despair and yet he is not condemned. The devils may beat the great Hell-drum in his ear till he thinks himself to be on the very brink of perdition. He may read the Bible and think that every threat is against him and that every promise shuts its mouth and will not cheer him—and he may at last despond and despond and despond—till he is ready to break the harp that has so long been hanging on the willow.

He may say, "The Lord has forsaken me. My God will be gracious no more," but it is not true. Yes, he may be ready to swear a thousand times that God's mercy is gone forever and that His faithfulness will fail forever more, but it is not true, it is not true. A thousand liars so swearing to a falsehood could not make it true and our doubts and fears are all of them liars. If there were ten thousand of them and they all professed the same, it is a falsehood that God ever did forsake His people, or that He ever cast from Him an innocent man—and you are innocent, remember, when you believe in Jesus.

"But," you say, "I am full of sin." "Yes," I say, "but that sin has been laid on Christ." "Oh," you say, "but I sin daily." "Yes," I say, "but that sin was laid on Him before you committed it, years ago. It is

not yours. Christ has taken it away once and for all. You are a righteous man by faith and God will not forsake the righteous nor will He cast away the innocent." I say, then, the child of God may have his faith at a low ebb. He may lose the light of his Father's countenance and he may even get into thorough despair. But yet all these cannot disprove my text—"He that believes is not condemned."

"But what," you say, "if the child of God should sin?" It is a deep and tender subject, yet must we touch it and be bold here. I would not mind God's Truth lest any should make a bad use of it. I know there are some, not the people of God, who will say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound." Their condemnation is just. I cannot help the perversion of Truth. There

Volume 7 7ARE always men who will take the best of food as though it were poison and make the best of Truth into a lie and so be damning their own souls.

You ask, "What if a child of God should fall into sin?" I answer the child of God does fall into sin. Every day he mourns and groans because when he would do good, evil is present with him. But though he falls into sin, he is not condemned for all that—not by one of them, or by all of them put together, because his acceptance does not depend upon himself, but upon the perfect righteousness of Christ. And that perfect righteousness is not invalidated by any sins of his. He is perfect in Christ. And until Christ is imperfect, the imperfections of the creature do not mar the justification of the believer in the sight of God.

But oh, if he falls into some glaring sin—O God, keep us from it!—if he falls into some glaring sin, he shall go with broken bones, but he shall reach Heaven for all that. Though, in order to try him and let him see his vileness, he is allowed to go far astray, yet He that bought him will not lose him. He that chose him will not cast him away—He will say unto him, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins." David may go ever so far away, but David is not lost. He comes back and he cries, "Have mercy upon me, O God!" And so shall it be with every believing soul—Christ shall bring him back. Though he slip, he shall be kept and all the chosen seed shall meet around the Throne.

If it were not for this last Truth—though some may stick at it—what would become of some of God's people? They would be given up to despair. If I have been speaking to a backslider, I pray he will not make a bad use of what I have said. Let me say to him, "Poor Backslider! Your Father's heart yearns over you. He has not erased your name out of the registry. Come back, come back now to Him and say, "Receive me graciously and love me freely." And He will say, "I will put you among the children." He will pass by your backsliding and evil. He will heal your iniquities and you shall yet stand once more in His favor and know yourself to be still accepted in the Redeemer's righteousness and saved by His blood. This text does not mean that the child of God shall not be tried, or that he shall not even sometimes fall under the trial. But it does mean this—once and for all—he that believes on Christ is not condemned. At no time, by no means is he under the sentence of condemnation, but is evermore justified in the sight of God.

III. Now, dear Brethren, but little time remains for the last points. Therefore, in a hurried manner let me notice WHAT THIS TEXT EVIDENTLY INCLUDES. And may God grant that these few words may nevertheless do good to our souls!

"He that believes on Him is not condemned." If we are not condemned then at no time does God ever look upon His children, when they believe in Christ, as being guilty. Are you surprised that I should put it so? I put it so again—from the moment when you believe in Christ, God ceases to look upon you as being guilty. For He never looks upon you apart from Christ. You often look upon yourself as guilty and you fall upon your knees as you should do and you weep and lament. But even then, while you are weeping over inbred and actual sin, He is still saying out of Heaven, "So far as your justification is concerned, you are all fair and lovely."

You are black as the tents of Kedar—that is yourself by nature. You are fair as the curtains of Solomon—that is yourself in Christ. You are black with sin—that is yourself in Adam. But lovely—that is yourself in the Second Adam. Oh, think on that!—that you are always in God's sight lovely, always in God's sight as though you were perfect. For you are complete in Christ Jesus and perfect in Christ Jesus, as the Apostle puts it in another place. Always do you stand completely washed and fully clothed in Christ. Remember this. For it is certainly included in my text.

Another great thought included in my text is this. You are never able as a believer to be punished for your sins. You will be chastised on account of them, as a father chastises his child. That is a part of the Gospel dispensation. But you will not lie smitten for your sins as the law-giver smites the criminal. Your Father may often punish you as He punishes the wicked. But never for the same reason. The ungodly stand on the ground of their own demerits—their sufferings are awarded as their due deserts. But your sorrows do not come to you as matter of desert. They come to you as a matter of love.

God knows that in one sense your sorrows are such a privilege that you may account them as a blessing you do not deserve. I have often thought of that when I have had a sore trouble. I know some people say, "You deserved the trouble." Yes, my dear Brethren, but there is not enough merit in all Christians put together to deserve such a good thing as the loving rebuke of our heavenly Father. Perhaps you cannot see that. You cannot think that a trouble can come to you as a real blessing in the Covenant.

But I know that the rod of the Covenant is as much the gift of grace as the blood of the Covenant. It is not a matter of desert or merit. It is given to us because we noted it. But I question whether we were ever so good as to deserve it. We were never able to get up to so high a standard as to deserve so rich, so gracious a Providence as this Covenant blessing—the rod of our chastening God. Never at any time in your life has a law-stroke fallen upon you. Since you believed in Christ you are out of the Law's jurisdiction. The law of England cannot touch a Frenchman while he lives under the protection of his own Emperor. You are not under the Law—you are under Grace.

The Law of Sinai cannot touch you, for you are out of its jurisdiction. You are not in Sinai or in Arabia. You are not the son of Hagar or the son of a handmaid—you are the son of Sarah and are come to Jerusalem and are free. You are out of Arabia and are come to God's own happy land. You are not under Hagar, but under Sarah—under God's Covenant of Grace. You are a child of Promise and you shall have God's own inheritance. Believe this, that never shall a law-stroke fall on you—never shall God's anger in a judicial sense drop on you. He may give you a chastising stroke—not as the result of sin—but rather as the result of His own rich

Volume 7 9grace. That would only get the sin out of you that you may be perfected in sanctification, even as you are now perfect and complete before Him in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I was about to go into a list of things which this text includes, but the time fails me—therefore I must spend the last minute or two in saying WHAT THIS TEXT EXCLUDES.

What does it exclude? Well I am sure it excludes boasting. "He that believes is not condemned." Ah, if it said, "He that works is not condemned," then you and I might boast in any quantity. But when it says, "He that believes"—why, there is no room for us to say half a word for old self. No, Lord, if I am not condemned, it is Your free grace, for I have deserved to be condemned a thousand times since I have been in this pulpit tonight.

When I am on my knees and I am not condemned, I am sure it must be sovereign grace, for even when I am praying I deserve to be condemned. Even when we are repenting we are sinning and adding to our sins while we are repenting of them. Every act we do, as the result of the flesh, is to sin again and our best performances are so stained with sin that it is hard to know whether they are good works or bad works.

So far as they are our own, they are bad and so far as they are the works of the Spirit they are good. But then the goodness is not ours, it is the Spirit's and only the evil remains to us. Ah, then, we cannot boast! Be gone, pride! Be gone! The Christian must be a humble man. If he lifts up his head to say something, then he is nothing indeed. He does not know where he is, or where he stands, when he once begins to boast—as though his own right hand had gotten him the victory. Leave off boasting, Christian. Live humbly before your God and never let a word of selfcongratulation escape your lips. Sacrifice self and let your song be before the Throne—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be glory forever."

What next does the text exclude? Methinks it ought to exclude—now I am about to smite myself—it ought to exclude doubts and fears. "He that believes is not condemned." How dare you and I draw such long faces and go about as we do sometimes as though we had a world of cares upon our backs! What would I have given ten or eleven years ago if I could have known this text was sure to me that I was not condemned? Why, I thought if I could feel I was once forgiven and had to live on bread and water and be locked up in a dungeon and every day be flogged with a cato-nine tails, I would gladly have accepted it if I could have once felt my sins forgiven.

Now you are a forgiven man and yet you are cast down! Oh, shame on you! No condemnation! And yet miserable? Fie, Christian! Get up and wipe the tears from your eyes. Oh, if there is a person lying in jail now, to be executed next week, if you could go to him and say, "You are pardoned," would he not spring up with delight from his seat? And although he might have lost his goods and though it would be possible for him, after pardon, to have to suffer many things, yet, so long as life was spared, what would all this be to him? He would feel that it was less than nothing. Now, Christian, you are pardoned. Your sins are all forgiven. Christ has said to you, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you"—and are you yet miserable? Well, if we must be so sometimes, let us make it as short as we can. If we must be sometimes cast down, let us ask the Lord to lift us up again. I am afraid some of us get into bad habits and come to make it a matter of practice to be downcast. Mind Christian, mind, it will grow upon you—that peevish spirit—if you do

not resist that sinfulness at first, it will get worse with you. If you do not come to God to turn these doubts and fears out of you, they will soon swarm upon you like flies in Egypt.

When you are able to kill the first great doubt, you will perhaps kill a hundred. For one great doubt will breed a thousand and to kill the mother is to kill the whole brood. Therefore look with all your heart against the first doubt lest you should become confirmed in your despondency and grow into sad despair, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." If this excludes boasting, it ought to exclude doubts, too.

Once more—"He that believes on Him is not condemned." This excludes sinning any more. My Lord, have I sinned against You so many times and yet have You freely forgiven me all? What stronger motive could I have for keeping me from sinning again? Ah, there are some who are saying this is a licentious doctrine. A thousand devils rolled into one must the man be who can find any licentiousness here. What? Go and sin because I am forgiven? Go and live in iniquity because Jesus Christ took my guilt and suffered in my place?

Human nature is bad enough but methinks this is the very worst state of human nature when it tries to draw an argument for sin from the free grace of God. Bad as I am I do feel this—that it is hard to sin against a pardoning God. It is far harder to sin against the blood of Christ and against a sense of pardon than it is against the terrors of the Law and the fear of Hell itself. I know that when my soul is most alarmed by a dread of the wrath of God, I can sin with comfort compared with what I could when I have a sense of His love shed abroad in my heart. What more monstrous—to read your title clear—and sin?

Oh, vile reprobate! You are on the borders of the deepest Hell. But I am sure if you are a child of God, you will say when you have read your title clear and feel yourself justified in Christ Jesus—

"Now, for the love I bear His name, What was my gain, I count my loss; My former pride I call my shame, And nail my glory to His Cross."

Yes and I must and will esteem all things but loss for Jesus' sake. O may my Soul be found in Him, perfect in His righteousness!

This will make you live near to Him—this will make you like unto Him. Do not think that this doctrine by dwelling on it will make you think lightly of sin. It will make you think of it as a hard and stern executioner to put Christ to death—as an awful load that could never be lifted from

Volume 7 11 you except by the eternal arm of God. And then you will come to hate sin with all your soul because it is rebellion against a loving and gracious God and you shall by this means, far better than by any Arminian doubts or any legal quibbles, be led to walk in the footsteps of your Lord Jesus and to follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

I think this whole sermon, though I have been preaching to the children of God, is meant for sinners, too. Sinner, I would that you did say so. If you know this, that he that believes is not condemned, then, Sinner, if you believe, you will not be condemned and may all I have said tonight help you to this belief in your soul.

Oh, but you say, "May I trust Christ?" As I said this morning, it is not a question of whether you may or may not, you are commanded. The Scripture commands the Gospel to be preached to

every creature and the Gospel is—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." I know you will be too proud to do it unless God by His grace should humble you. But if you feel tonight that you are nothing and have nothing of your own, I think you will be right glad to take Christ to be your All-in-All.

If you can say with poor Jack the Huckster—

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,"

You may go on and say with him, this night—

"But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All."

God grant that it may be so, for His name's sake. Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Chapter 98

John 3,18 #964 - The Essence of the Gospel

THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 964

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 4, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that believes on Him is not condemned. But he that believes

not is condemned already, because he has not believed

in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John 3:18.

I MAY have preached from this text before. I may have done so several times. If I have not, I ought to have. It is the whole Bible in miniature. We may say of it so many words, so many volumes, for every single syllable here is charged to the full with meaning. We may read it, and re-read it, and continue still to read it day and night, yet ever find some fresh instruction in it. It is the essence of the Gospel. The good news in brief. When our Lord Jesus Christ shall come a second time, before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

That will not, however, be the first time in which the Presence of the Lord Jesus has acted as a separator. It is always so wherever He comes. Men are as one body in their fallen condition—all alike estranged from God until He appears. But His coming finds out the chosen and calls them apart, and on the other hand, the unbelievers are discovered. Two camps are formed out of the once-mingled multitude. Each goes to each, each one after its own kind finds its fellows, and between the two fellowships there is a deep gulf which divides them as clearly as light is distinct from the darkness, or death is divided from life.

Other distinctions sink into insignificance in the Presence of Jesus— riches or wealth, learning or ignorance, power or weakness—are matters of too small account to divide mankind in the Presence of the great Discerner of spirits. Only these two characters—Believers and unbelievers— stand out in clear relief. As it is in our text, so is it as a matter of fact in the entire universe—the only two really vital distinctions for time and for eternity are just these—Believers and Unbelievers, receivers of Christ and rejecters of Him.

Furthermore, as today the Presence of Christ divides the masses, and gathers men into assorted companies, so also does that Presence ensure a present judgment. It is written that He shall say to them on His right hand, "Come, you blessed," and to those on His left, "Depart, you cursed."

And even so at this moment His Presence, with equal certainty, produces a judging. For here in the text we find Believers not condemned, or in other words, acquitted, and we find Unbelievers condemned already.

The, "Come, you blessed," is anticipated in the non-condemnation, and the, "Depart, you cursed," is, as it were, already heard in the verdict, "Condemned already." I charge you, therefore, this morning, while the Word is preached in your hearing, to remember that a clear and allimportant division will be worked while this sermon is being delivered. This day the Son of David holds His Throne, and in this house He sits in judgment. In the preaching of the Gospel at this moment His majestic voice divides the sinners from the saints, and if sensitive to His Presence, we shall either tremble or rejoice.

God grant that while this division shall go on, as it must go on, for He will be this day a savor of death unto death or a life unto life to every one of our souls, we may all be found among Believers, and none of us shut out as condemned already by being Unbelievers.

I. I shall ask you, this morning, first, to CONSIDER TO WHICH OF THE TWO CLASSES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT WE BELONG. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Have we a share in that character? Let us see to it. What is meant by believing on Him, or rather in Him, for the word "eis" is rather in Him than on Him. If I mistake not, the word, "believes in Him," means a great deal more than most of us have seen in it.

I think I see many shades of believing. There are some who believe concerning Christ, that is to say, they believe that He is the Messiah and is the Savior of men. Many accept this for a Truth of God because their fathers did so, and it is to them a matter of unquestioned tradition. They are born in what is commonly thought to be a Christian country, and therefore have they taken up with the Christian faith, and theoretically and notionally they believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. They would not hesitate to stand up and say, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried," and so on.

But remember, you may believe all that is orthodox concerning the Lord Jesus, and yet it will be no token that you are justified in Him. No one may dare to say that a belief in the Athanasian creed will ensure us of salvation. If you reject His Deity, if you deny His Atonement, such errors will be conclusive evidence that you are not a believer in Him, because you are not a believer of the Truth of God concerning Him. Therefore you must take your place among unbelievers, who are condemned already.

But on the other hand, if you hold the Scriptural Truth, and believe accurately concerning the Lord Jesus, yet if you go no further, your mere faith about Him, or concerning Him, will not bring you salvation. To know Christ is of no avail, unless it can be said, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you."

It is a step further when we have come to believing Him. This is sometimes mentioned in Scripture—believing Him. "I know whom I have believed." Believing concerning Him that He is God's Christ, His Anointed, His Sent One, His Messiah, we therefore should, as a matter of course, accept whatever He says as being true. And if with our hearts we do this, I think we are saved. But we may think we do this and notionally may give our assent to His teaching, and yet,

notwithstanding, we may not have attained unto His salvation. We may still be condemned Unbelievers, though we may think, and say, and profess that we believe Him.

Frequently in Scripture there is another form of the believing which clusters about the Greek word, "epi," believing upon Him. Our translators seem to have placed the word "on" here as though it were in our text, but it is hardly so in the Greek. There is a difference between believing on Him and believing in Him. To believe on Jesus is, indeed, a saving faith, for He that believes on Him shall not be confounded. To believe on Him is, as it were, to lean upon Him, to receive Him as God has set Him forth, and, in consequence, to make Him the foundation of our hope.

Believing concerning Him, and believing Him, we then come to repose upon Him, and to make Him our confidence. We believe that He can save us, we trust in Him to save us, and this is the essence of saving faith—to believe upon the appointed Redeemer. But in this particular case our text speaks of believing in Him, and this is something more than believing upon Him. Every man who really believes upon Christ will before long come to believe in Him. But there is a growth—believing in Him is more than believing upon Him.

How is that? If I thoroughly believe in a man, what is the result of it? Is he an advocate, and am I immersed in law? Then I trust my case to him—I leave the affair in his hands without fear—for I believe in my advocate. Very good. So far that may be believing upon him. But now he gives me directions and rules of action. If I believe in him I shall certainly follow those rules to the letter, being fully convinced that they will lead me to a right issue. I commit the matter practically as well as theoretically to the man whom I have chosen to represent me, and I do so cheerfully, for I believe in him.

I am like a man on board a vessel—I believe in him who is the captain. What then? If he bids me do this, or that, or the other, I may hear someone call his orders foolish, but I believe in him, and I do, at once, whatever he bids me. His bidding may appear absurd to one who has no faith in him, but to me it is wise and right. Suppose there should be raised up at this juncture for poor unhappy France, a man of high military genius, a man who shall be capable with such material as may come to hand to meet the terrible foe, and to disperse the cloud which now hangs over the capital city.

If the people shall believe in the man, what then? Why they will surrender the direction of affairs to him. They will implicitly follow his lead. Does he command a sortie, does he bid the army advance? They believe in him, and the sortie is made, and the troops advance gallantly to the conflict. Should he counsel delay, and the avoidance of a great battle, those who believe in him will entrench themselves, or retire before the foe.

If they are absolutely sure in their hearts that he is the man who guarantees victory, they will be certain to obey his orders. He will be their oracle, their dictator, and that most joyfully on their parts. So that to believe in our Lord means this—that I believe Him to be the Son of God, and believe all other Truths of God concerning Him. That I also believe whatever He says to be the Truth of God. In other words, I believe Him. Yet more than this, I cast my soul upon His atoning merits that He may save it, and so believe upon Him.

And furthermore, having so done I give myself up entirely to the Savior's holy guidance. I believe Him to be infallible as the director of my spirit. I feel a union with Him. I come to be in Him—His

cause is my cause, my cause His cause—I believe in Him. Now this is the Man of whom the text says, "He that believes in Him is not condemned," and the question I put this morning to myself and to you is, Have we believed in Jesus? Do we really take Him to be our All in All? Do we consent that He should guide and lead us till He brings us to eternal felicity?

The connection of our text will help us to form a judgment as to whether we are, indeed, Believers in Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, have you realized, by a true exercise of faith, what is meant by the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the present chapter? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." As the serpent-bitten Israelite looked to the bronze serpent when it was uplifted, have you, in the same way, looked to Jesus and found healing through looking to Him?

By this you may judge yourselves. Have you been healed of the wounds of sin and quickened into a new and heavenly life? Have you in very deed made the crucified Savior your soul's resting place? In the verses which follow the text, you find such words as these, "He that does the truth comes to the light." Do you, my Brethren, as the result of having trusted in Christ come to the light? Is it your desire to know God's Truth, God's will, God's Law, God's Word? Are you seeking after the light, and are you desirous that the works worked in you should be seen to be the fruit of God's own Spirit? By this, also, can you judge yourself?

It is vain to say, "I trust in Christ," if you have never looked to Him with that same childlike look with which the Israelite looked to the bronze serpent—and equally vain for you to profess to be a believer in Him, unless you desire the light. You may be in partial darkness still, as doubtless you are, but are you seeking more light, seeking God, seeking Truth, seeking right? By this shall you know whether the Father has begotten you unto a new birth, whether you are to a certainty a new man, no longer a lightshunner but a light-seeker. No longer, because your deeds are evil, seeking to conceal yourself from the convicting Word of God, but because your deeds are truthful, seeking to receive more light, that your works may be made manifest to your own conscience as being truly worked of God in your soul.

The consideration which I proposed just now has to be taken up with regard to the second class. Are we Unbelievers? It is to be feared that there are some such here. If that is so, it may be of some service to them to know where they are, and what they are. "He that believes not is condemned already." Some of you here are very inconsistent, because though you believe not in Christ Jesus, that is to say, do not trust your souls with Him, nor give yourselves up obediently to serve Him, yet you believe concerning Him that He is the Christ of God.

And if He were here today and spoke to you, you would believe His Words, though I cannot say you would so believe them as to act upon them. It is so very strange that you should believe Him to be the Son of God and yet should not trust Him! You believe what He speaks is true, and after He has warned you of the wrath to come you still sit down in stolid indifference and do not seek the salvation which He provides. Instead of looking to the bronze serpent, you act as the Israelites would have done had they sought out another remedy.

You have not believed in Christ, but if you have any belief that you need a Savior, I suppose your own common reason makes you seek one. You are evidently, therefore, seeking another salvation

than that which God provides. You are refusing what God has ordained, that you may find something of your own. There is but one Savior—that Savior this day you will not trust in—you are refusing Him to your own destruction. You are this day shutting your eyes to the one only Light, and though you have some desire towards light at times, yet you love darkness rather than light, and still continue as you were—dark, dark, dark—for you do not like to be reproved.

You cannot bear that the Gospel should come too cuttingly home to touch you in your conscience and rebuke you for your sins. To this day you remain an Unbeliever and a lover of the darkness. Search, I pray you, and look! While this heart which now addresses you will pity you, I trust God's heart may pity you, too, and may you yet escape out of the condition of the Unbeliever, and yet be numbered with the Believers in Christ.

Thus much on our first point, which I leave to your earnest selfexamination, hoping that it may not be treated lightly.

II. Now, secondly, and for a very short time, let us CONSIDER THE CONDITION OF THE BELIEVER. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." What a joyful sentence is this! Provided you have ascertained that you do believe in Jesus, turn this sweet word over and over in your souls, my Brethren. Is it not delightful to think that you have it from God's own mouth by inspiration, and to note that the inspiration is of a remarkable kind, for you have it not only by the Spirit of God, but you have from Jesus Christ Himself the sweet assurance that you are not condemned!

What joy, what peace this Word should speak unto your soul! Let me show you for a minute how the Believer escapes condemnation. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." One reason is because he does not offer himself for judgment. He that believes in Christ does not present himself to be tried. He says, "No, my Lord, I have no argument with You, I plead guilty, I confess the condemnation. There is no need of trial. You are justified when You speak, and clear when You condemn." There sits the Judge, and the prisoner should stand opposite to him, for they are two parties. But behold, in this case the prisoner leaves the place, declines a trial, falls at the Judge's feet, acknowledges that the sentence, if carried out, would be just, and pleads guilty.

Having done this the Believer sees that the sentence which he acknowledges and confesses to be right has been already laid upon his Surety— and in that Surety he believes. What does he believe about Him? Why, that God, that He might magnify His Justice and His Grace, was in Christ Jesus! And that the Son of God did hang upon the Cross, and bleed and die, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. The Believer confesses the justice of the sentence, and therefore is at one with God. He comes to the Light, and his deeds are reproved, and he accepts the reproof, and acknowledges it to be true.

Then he looks to the Cross, and he says, "This very sentence to which I do subscribe with my own hands that it is just, has been laid upon my ever glorious and blessed Surety, the Only Begotten of the Father, and He has been punished instead of me. And I am therefore free, since Christ died as my ransom." This is the way in which the Believer comes not to be condemned—he accepts the condemnation, and then sees it laid upon his Surety! This brings him peace. The Justice of God would have disturbed his mind. He sees that Justice satisfied, and he declares in his own heart that if God is satisfied, he is satisfied.

If God's Justice is honored, then conscience feels that all is well. And now what happens? Why this believer in Christ, not being condemned, seeks the light—from this day forward he desires more and more to walk in the light of knowledge, the light of the Divine Presence, the light of Divine holiness. O my Brethren, there was a time when our souls inclined after sin! But now, though we sin, we mourn over it, and because we mourn it we have evidence that "it is no longer I," as the Apostle says, "but sin that dwells in me."

The very inmost I, the true, most real ego within my soul now desires holiness. If we could be as we would, we would be pure as God is pure. Our heart hungers and thirsts after righteousness. We come to the Light, and now, having believed, we are in such a condition that our deeds, though discovered, do not bring us shame and confusion. In that very Light our works are made manifest that they are worked in God—and we rejoice that God is working in us by His Spirit holy desires, emotions, and actions—which shall go on increasing until we shall be perfectly delivered from sin.

This is the condition of the man who believes in Christ! It is a very happy condition, a very hopeful condition, a very heavenly condition—who would not desire to be in it? It all hinges upon the believing, for with the believing in Jesus there comes the new birth. With the new birth comes the desire after Light. With the desire after Light there arises a progress towards it—and a manifestation of the secret working of the Holy Spirit within the soul. Happy Believers, thrice happy in what you are as well as in what you shall be!

III. And now, thirdly, and here comes our most solemn work—may God's Holy Spirit help us in it. CONSIDER THE CONDITION OF THE UNBELIEVER. "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Observe the fact, itself, which is here stated! "He that believes not is condemned already." Let me enlarge upon this very solemn Truth of God.

First, the Unbeliever offers himself for judgment. "He has not believed on the name"—what is the name? It is the Savior, Jesus. He who believes on Jesus, the Savior, confesses that he needs saving and declines to stand on the footing of Law. But he who refuses the Savior does in effect say, "I do not require a Savior, I am willing to stand my trial by the Law." I tell you, every soul that declines a Savior, does, in effect, ask to be judged by the Law. There stands the alternative—are you guilty—will you confess it? If so, accept the Savior.

But if, on the other hand, you say, "I will not accept the Savior," in the bottom of your soul there lies the presumptuous conceit, "I can stand the judgment. I do not want pardon and Grace." Then, Sir, if you ask for judgment you shall have it! And behold the result of it—God declares you to be condemned already. You have not believed, you have asked for judgment, you shall have it, but it is your ruin.

The Unbeliever, himself, gives personal evidence to his own condemnation. Do you enquire how he does this? The text points us to his not believing. Is yonder person a condemned or not condemned man? Ask him what he thinks of Christ. If he replies honestly, he says, "I do not accept God's testimony about Jesus Christ. I do not receive Jesus as my Savior." Either he claims that he does not need a Savior or else he does not feel that Jesus is the Savior he needs. He rejects the testimony of God concerning Christ—is not that enough to condemn a man? If a man,

in the very presence of the judge, committed theft or murder, he would condemn himself. But is it not a still higher offense than this, in the very Presence of God to do despite to His Son by practically declaring His work and blood to have been unnecessary?

Is it not the height of daring that a soul should stand in the Presence of the God of Mercy and hear Him say in His Word, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and that the soul should reply, "I have nothing to do with the Lamb of God"? What further witness do we want with regard to your enmity to God? He that will not believe in Christ would murder God if He could. His not believing in Christ is virtually to make God a liar.

Still further, he that believes not in Christ gives evidence against himself, for he rejects "the name." Observe the text, "He has not believed on the name." As I had already hinted, that name is Jesus, the Savior. The man says, "I will not have the Savior." Many of you have not said so much in words, but you practically say it. For you do not believe in the Savior. You remain at this moment Saviorless—out of Christ—without hope, without pardon, without mercy. And you have continued to do so under the preaching of the Gospel now for many years.

What more evidence do you want? If a man will reject God, even as a Savior, there must be a dreadful venom in his heart against God. If God appoints Christ to be King, and I reject Him, that rejection shows that I dislike God. But when He appoints Him to be a Savior, the errand being one entirely of mercy and goodness, if I reject Him I must in my soul have an amazing depth of enmity against God. By this clear proof I condemn myself!

My Brothers and Sisters, if you look at the text again you will see that he who believes not, rejects a most exalted Person. For he has not believed on the name "of the only begotten Son of God." What a word is that, "On the Jesus, who is God's only begotten Son." I wish I had language suitable for the utterance of a thought which presses down my very spirit, as it did last Sunday evening. That God should send a Savior, and for a Savior the Only Begotten, the Lord of Heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that is made, and that He should come with testimony of love, the love of God to sinners, and seal that testimony with His blood. And that men should refuse to believe in Him!

It is the most monstrous iniquity that could be imagined! I cannot see that Satan, himself, with all his blasphemy, has ever gone this length. He was never placed where he could reject, as a Savior, the only begotten Son of God. When men rejected Moses they perished without mercy, for he was sent of God. But when a man despises the Only Begotten, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, we may well say—"Call no witnesses against the man, rake up none of the details of his past life, this is quite evidence enough."

If he has not believed on such a One as this, he is condemned already. There is no need of a trial. Unbelief itself is the vilest of all treasons—out of his own mouth the sinner is condemned. Do you not see, O Sinner, how the matter stands? The infinite Lord of Mercy, that you might not perish, has devised a wondrous way of salvation which has astonished cherubim and seraphim, and made Heaven ring with song, and this you utterly reject! The plan so stupendous in conception is briefly this—that the Creator should suffer that the created rebel might escape—that the Infinite should come into this world and be put to shame that the guilty might be clear! And all you are asked to do, all that is demanded of you is that you submit to be saved by this plan—that you do

but trust in the Jesus who is Divine, who is also Man—do but trust Him to save you.!

Will you not? Oh, will you not? Sirs, will you spurn almighty love? Can you turn away from boundless mercy? Then what shall I say of you, but just what the text says—you condemn yourselves, you are "condemned already"? You must be infinitely wicked! You must be enormously, monstrously, diabolically at enmity with God, or else, surely, a benefit so precious you would not slight! Surely a plan of mercy so adapted to your condition you could not have the impertinence to reject! "Condemned already because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Solemn words! Hear them and tremble!

From the verses following the text we gather that you Unbelievers go on to give further evidence against yourselves, for every man who rejects Christ, the true Light, always goes on to reject other forms of the Light of God's Word, God's Spirit, and his conscience. He loves darkness rather than light, and comes not to the Light lest his deeds should be reproved. You quench the Spirit, I know you do, if you reject the Savior. You turn a deaf ear to your conscience, you do violence to your own judgment. The Truth of God you do not wish to learn. It is not possible that you can be a candid seeker after light if you refuse to receive Him who is Truth's central Sun.

Your further rejection of Light is confirmatory evidence that you are condemned already though your not believing is, in itself, evidence enough. And now solemnly, and in the name of Him that lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore, speaking for that Christ who, though once He was slain, now sits at the right hand of God, I ask those who are under this second character to listen to these simple but weighty words of admonition. Consider, I pray you, O Unbeliever, that the condemnation which is pronounced upon you already is no matter of form. Our judges sometimes read out sentences of death upon a certain order of criminals. And the sentence is recorded though it is never intended that the sentence shall be executed.

But from God's bar there never proceeds a sentence that is meant needlessly to alarm. You are condemned already, and as surely as you live, and as surely as God lives, He will not let His Word remain a dead letter. That sentence shall be no idle threat! In your proper person you shall be made to know what the power of His wrath is. "Who knows the power of your anger?" says the Psalmist. They only know it who feel it, and you will feel it before long, for the sentence will assuredly be fulfilled.

The Lord has power at this or any moment to fulfill His sentence. What power have you to resist it? Who is there that can help you to withstand Him? You are utterly in His hands, you cannot escape from His prison. If you climbed up to Heaven He is there. If you dove to Hell He is there. The whole universe is but one great prison for an enemy of God. You cannot escape Him—neither can you resist Him. If your bones were granite and your heart were steel, His fires would melt down your spirit. Against Him you can no more stand than the chaff against the fire or the dust against the whirlwind. O that you would feel this and desist from your insane rebellion!

Remember, there is no promise given to you that He will not execute the sentence of His wrath this very day. You have no warrant either from His Word or from His angels to assure you that God has suspended the sentence even for the next hour. You are living by His forbearance, spared by the Divine Sovereignty. Some rave against Sovereignty, but in this case it is not Justice that spares you, it is the mere will of God that for awhile keeps you out of Hell. You tell me that nothing

endangers your life at this moment—how do you know that?

The arrows of death often fly imperceptibly. I have stood in congregations preaching on two occasions when the unseen darts of death struck one of my hearers, so that one died on each occasion while listening to the Word of the Gospel. God needs no miracle to put His sentence into execution at this moment. He need not disturb the natural order of affairs for you to die instantly. And if He so willed it, your soul's destruction would, without the slightest effort on His part, take place at this very moment, even where you are.

Remember with deep concern that God is angry with you right now. This statement is no invention of mine—it is written by the pen of Inspiration that, "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turns not He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow, and made it ready." God is more angry with some of you than He is with some in Hell. Are you startled by the assertion? "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you." The sins you have already committed are greater than those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the anger is in proportion to the guilt.

An angry God holds you over the gulf of Hell. Justice demands that you fall into it—and it is nothing but His merciful will that keeps you out of it. He has but to will it and you who are condemned already would be forever where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched, before next time the clock shall tick.

Up to this time, let me remind you, you have done nothing to appease the Divine wrath. You have gone on sinning. Or if you tell me you have reformed, that you have thought of these things, that you have prayed—do you think that such things will remove the Divine wrath? The Lord has told you that the only way of salvation is to believe in Jesus, but you try to find another. Do you think that such conduct will please Him, that such a procedure will make Him less angry with you? You insult His Son when you suppose that you can save yourself by your tears and prayers—will this turn away the Lord's anger?

When you imagine that your Church attendance and Chapel attendance will save you, you set a low estimate upon what Jesus did. You do despite to the Cross as long as you remain Unbelievers. You say, "We are doing what we can." You are doing nothing, I tell you, that can appease the anger of God! You are rather, by these very actions of yours, which you think to be good, setting up in opposition to Him an Antichrist upon which He will look with abhorrence. He says He will save by Christ, and no way else. And so long as you seek another way, you, as it were, spit into the very face of the Only Begotten by the insolence of your selfrighteousness.

Meanwhile, let me remind you that God's wrath, though it comes not on you yet, is like a stream that is dammed up. Every moment it gathers force—if it bursts not the dyke—yet every hour is swelling. Each day and each moment of each day in which you remain an Unbeliever, you are treasuring up wrath against the Day of Wrath when the measure of your iniquity is full. How earnestly would I persuade you to escape from condemnation! If you dream that to be condemned of God is a trifle, undeceive your souls, for those who have passed where the sentence is executed, could they come back to you, need not tell the tale of woe, the very sight of them would convince you that to be lost is an awful thing! On their heads must fall the wrath of God, who, by softening down the punishment, become the means of hardening sinners in their sins. It is not

within the power of thought to conceive what God's wrath is. No language, even though it should make both ears tingle, can ever fully express it. I am not one of those who would so delude your poor souls, O Unbelievers, as to make you think it a light thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

O turn, turn, turn! Why will you die? Why will you reject Him whom you have such reasons to receive? Concerning whom His very Person is the best argument for love? The Christ of God must be worthy of our hearts' affections—His very errand on earth, as it seems to me, would, if we were not mad, ensure our confidence. For He came to SAVE, to PARDON, to pass by the sin of the past! Oh, why do you stand out against Him, and in this way pull down upon your heads the wrath of an angry God?

Let me point out to you the way to escape. The only way of escape for any man or woman here is to believe in Jesus Christ. "I am praying about it," says one. My text says nothing of the sort. "I will think of it." Think of it? You will think yourself into Hell before long! Immediate faith is what I, as God's ambassador, demand of you in the name of the Christ of God— immediate, instantaneous faith in Jesus! Behold the emblem of the Gospel minister and of his message! Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness upon the great central standard in the very midst of the camp where men were dying all around him. They are bitten with the serpent, and what has Moses to declare to them as a remedy? He bids them look and live!

Some of them will think of it, some of them will consider it, others of them will pray about it. But he has no commission to console any of these—his one command is an immediate look—he has no promise to those who will not look. Even thus is Jesus lifted up among you. There is life in a look, life now, life at this moment. I cannot guarantee you that the serpent's bite shall not be your eternal ruin if you linger for a single hour. The Prophet's one word is, "Look now." Today, God in mercy sends to everyone in this house this message—"The times of your ignorance God winked at," but now commands all men everywhere to repent. He sends His Gospel message, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

That message I cannot be certain will ever come to you again. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Every moment you do not believe, you are sinning against God by that unbelief. I cannot, therefore, tolerate that you should wait a moment. Jesus is God! He became Man! He died! He lives and bids you trust Him—promising that you shall live. Trust Him now, then! He is worthy of your confidence. Sin not against Him. Sin not against your own souls by rejecting Him. Remember what it was which Moses lifted up—it was a serpent—the image of that same serpent which bit them. Were they healed by looking to that which poisoned them? Assuredly they were. What is that which has poisoned you, Sinner? It is the curse of sin. What is that which I hold up today in the Gospel? It is Christ made a curse for us! He takes upon Himself our sin! Though in Him was no sin, yet He was made sin for us—and if you trust Him to be the sin-offering for you, to suffer for you, to bleed for you—and so trust in Him as to take Him from now on as your standard, resolving to follow the uplifted Crucified One throughout life, even until He brings you to God Himself in Heaven, you are NOT condemned!

But if Jesus is lifted up and you refuse to believe, on your heads is your guilt, I say, with trembling solemnity, on your own heads is your guilt! Those words of mine, O Unbelievers, will be swift witnesses against you at the Last Great Day. As truly as ever Christ came to Jerusalem, so truly

does He come to you, this morning, in the preaching of the Word. I am a poor feeble man, but I speak to you as best I can. Nevertheless, if you refuse my word it is not me you reject, that were nothing—you reject the Gospel which I preach to you. In the name of Him that made Heaven and earth, that made you, and holds you in life, against whom you have sinned, these terms of mercy are presented to you—will you have them?

This Grace is brought home to you, and I am bid to press it upon you, even as the Word says, to "compel them to come in." If you reject the only begotten Son of God there must still abide against you this solemn sentence, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed." Did I hear you say, "I hope I shall believe." Sir, I have nothing to do with that, and I have no hope for you. "I hope I shall repent one day." I despair of you while you talk so. It is TODAY that God separates this congregation into the two parts, the Believer and the Unbeliever.

Today He blesses the Believer and testifies that he is not condemned! Today He curses the Unbeliever and tells him he is condemned already. My business is not with tomorrows, nor can I promise that the white flag of mercy will be hung out tomorrow. Today the Cross is the banner of Grace. Look to it and live! It is the ladder which reaches to Heaven. The crucified Savior is the gate of salvation. O that you would receive Him! May God grant you may, and He shall be glorified by you in this life and in the world to come. God bless you. Amen.

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

John 3,33 #2158 - Christ's Testimony Received

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY RECEIVED

NO. 2158

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 10, 1890,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true."

John 3:33.

IN opening this discourse I would call your attention to the different statistics given by John's disciples and by John himself. In the 26th verse, the disciples say, "All men come to Him"—that is their judgment of how the ministry of Jesus was succeeding. John, in the 32nd verse, said, "And no man receives His testimony." If we view them as both correct, then the disciples looked at outward appearances and in their view the cause of Jesus seemed to be prospering to an overwhelming degree—"All men come to Him." But John looked below the surface, at the true spiritual results and his verdict was, "And no man receives His testimony."

Be very doubtful of statistics—they depend very much upon the person compiling them. Some, with sanguine spirit, say everything that is delightful and encouraging. Others, with more serious and with, perhaps, more severe judgment, say much that is depressing. I am inclined to take both these opinions with a grain of salt. Each one was intended for truth, but neither of them was exact. We often hear persons say that there are crowds attending such a ministry, the people block up the gangways, they fill every seat and the preacher is very useful for "all men come to him." This may be true and yet there may be few conversions and little spiritual results so that another may as truly say, "No man receives his testimony."

Ah, dear Friends, we can never be satisfied with a numerous congregation—we want souls to receive the testimony of Christ! Even though we may thank God that all sorts and conditions of men lend willing ears to our teaching, yet only one note sounds the knell of our joy! If we hear it said, "No man receives His testimony," we are sad at heart. Forgetting what the disciples reported, let us now look at what John said, "No man receives His testimony." He did not mean, literally, that no one received the Truth of God, for his next word was, "He that has received His testimony." He meant that comparatively none received it. Compared with the crowds who came to Him, compared with the nation of Israel, compared with the human race, those who received Christ's testimony were so few that his sadness made him call them none.

John, though he went a little below the mark, was not far from the truth when he said, "No man receives His testimony." In these profound and wordy days, this is called the "pessimist" view of things. However, if it were not precisely the truth, it was mournfully near it. Today, Christ is

preached and many will come to hear about Him but, alas, few receive the Gospel into their hearts! Go through these crowded streets and mark how few receive the sacred testimony! Go into our provincial towns and country villages and note how few receive the Truth as it is in Jesus. When you look at the denominational rolls at the end of the year, what small additions have been made! I think one section of the Church reports one addition for the year. If any community reports as high as three or four per cent, people think wonders are accomplished!

The world can never be converted at the rate at which we are now going, for the increase of population is greater than the increase of the Churches. We are relatively further back than we were. There are more Christians, but there are fewer Christians in proportion to the population! There is much reason for crying earnestly to God to work more mightily upon the hearts of men. How glad was John to think that some had received Christ's testimony! How hungry he was that there should be more! In what earnest tones does he set forth his Lord's claims in the verses around our text! He would have men go beyond himself and find Christ and receive His testimony. This is how the case stands. Men had wandered far from God. God desired that men should come back to Him and therefore He sent a witness to men to tell them of His kindly feelings towards them and to show in His own Person, teaching, life and death how really and truly God desired that men should be at peace with Him.

The only-begotten Son was born into our world and took our Nature, that He might be a witness to the people of the Character of God towards us, that we, knowing how God felt, might be led to cry, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." He would have us touched with tender relentings when we discover the greatness of the love and mercy of God towards us by seeing Him seeking and saving the lost in the Person of His onlybegotten Son. Of that subject I am going to speak this morning, keeping as closely as I can to the text and crying to the Holy Spirit for aid.

First, observe the Testifier carefully. Look at Him and see who it is that has come to reveal the Father unto us. Secondly, hearken to His testimony. What is it? Know it and believe it. Thirdly, note the rejecters— "No man receives His testimony." How sad is the fact! Then, coming closer, still, to the text, commune with those who do receive His Heaven-given testimony. Of these it is said that they have set to their seal that God is true.

I. First, let us OBSERVE THE TESTIFIER. Jesus, our Lord, as a Witness, is so wrapped up with the testimony which He bears, that you have to know Him before you can understand His witness—in fact, to receive Him is the same thing as to receive His testimony! If we have received Christ as what He is, we have received the testimony which He came to bear. Who is this Testifier? This Witness? We answer that, according to the context, it is "He that comes from above." To save us there has not come to us a man whose origin was at his birth, but One who existed long before and descended from above! It is true that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, but it is equally true that He had a preexistence from before all worlds! The Word was from the beginning with God—"without Him was not anything made that was made." He was God as truly before He became Man as ever He was afterwards. He that has come to save us has, in the highest sense, come from above. Let this kindle hope in the sinner's mind and let it draw forth faith in the Divine Ambassador. One has come from the highest heavens to lift those up, who, apart from Him must have sunk into the lowest Hell. Nearly 1,900 years have passed since He came and trod the roughest ways of this world and lived, sorrowed and suffered here below. From the

hills of Heaven He came to this land of sin that He might lift us up and give us a Divine inheritance.

He was one of the very highest Character. Observe—"He that comes from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth: He that comes from Heaven is above all." All other messengers that God has sent have had much earthliness about them and, assuredly, we who are now His messengers have much of it. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," but there was nothing in our Lord Jesus that could debase the Messenger. He was pure, perfect, heavenly—and though He bore our Nature, yet He shared not our sinfulness. And though He spoke in our tongue and brought down the mysteries of Heaven to our comprehension, yet still He spoke them in a heavenly style—a style to which a mere man could never have reached!

Moses wrote as a man and the Spirit of God only revealed Truth measurably by him. But our Lord Jesus Christ was full of Grace and Truth and He spoke with a Manhood united to Godhead, having the Spirit without measure. In all Jesus said there was a fullness, a power, a reality which mere men were not capable of containing. He was above all and others derived their authority from Him, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Will you not listen to one so supreme? "God, who at sundry times and in different manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Surely it shall go ill with him that refuses such a Messenger!

As He was above all in Character, so was He above all in rank. None can be compared with Him for dignity—the angels may be peers of the heavenly realm, but He is the Crown Prince of the blood-royal of eternity! He is God over all, before whom cherubim and seraphim veil their faces. He deigned to become subject to parents, but He was, none the less, above all—Lord, Ruler, Head over all things! Though He stooped to seek and save the lost, He was still higher than the highest! Though He laid His Glory by, that He might wash His disciples' feet—yes, and wash our sins away in His own blood—yet He was still Master and Lord. "See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven."

I cannot too highly speak of the Glory and honor and majesty which belong to our Emmanuel! If I had the tongue of men and of angels I could not sufficiently extol Him. He is the First-Born of every creature, yes, the Creator Himself! King of kings and Lord of lords is He and it is through so glorious a Person as this that God has sent to us a message of peace. Our ambassador is of a rank above all ranks that the Lord may show how highly He esteems His chosen of the race of man. We are greatly honored by dealing with so august a Messenger. Come, you willing hearts, and gladly receive the testimony of Him who is above all!

We are further told by John a very important fact which ought to weigh with every thoughtful mind. The testimony of Jesus is Personal testimony— "what He has seen and heard, that He testifies." The Prophets received their prophecies from the Holy Spirit who spoke to them of things which they had not seen. Sometimes they did not even understand what they wrote. They did not see those things of which they wrote for it is written that "many Prophets and kings have desired to see those things, but have not seen them." These things even angels desired to look into, but they were too mysterious for them. Our Lord Jesus Christ knows heavenly things of His own proper knowledge, for He has ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father. He knows the mind of God, for He is God. The secret intent and purpose of the Most High God are with His Son Jesus.

All that He reveals to men of the mercy of God He has Himself seen and heard. He was an eye and ear witness of the mind and will of Jehovah. Christ's teaching is not second-hand—"No man knows the Father, save the Son." Who taught Him wisdom? From where has this Man knowledge? From Himself, from His own eternal experience—as dwelling with God before all worlds He speaks to us. Do you want a better Messenger, my Hearers? How can the Lord serve you better than by sending One who knows what He declares—knows it by having heard and seen and handled it? With the God who made the heavens and fashioned the earth He ever dwelt, as One brought up with Him and He was daily His delight. The Lord God has sent as Ambassador to you One whom He "possessed in the beginning of His way, before His works of old." What more can you desire?

And then, further, the Baptist goes on to tell us that the testimony of Jesus is identical with the Words of God Himself. "He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that Christ is true." Do you think I am reading amiss? The Scripture says, "that God is true." The testimony of Jesus and the testimony of God are one—and when you believe Christ Jesus, you believe God! Further on we read, "for He whom God has sent speaks the Words of God: for God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him." If you deny what Christ says, you make God a liar, for you have not believed His testimony concerning His Son. So fully is the witness of Jesus backed up and supported by the Words of God—so fully does Jesus represent the purpose and the mind of the Father—that to doubt Him is to doubt the Eternal God!

Now, if you have a plan of salvation put before you by God's Messenger—which is most assuredly the very mind of God Himself—will you reject it? Will you fly in the face of God by rejecting salvation which comes stamped in every letter of it with Divine authority? I pray you, my Hearers, if you have not yet believed in Jesus, remain no longer in unbelief of Him, for it is unbelief of the Lord God, unbelief of the Triune Jehovah who made you and who keeps the breath in your nostrils! See what a Messenger we have, then, who speaks not His own words, but the words of Him that sent Him. Those words are full of Grace and Truth for they are full of God.

Read a little further on, in the next verse and you will see that this Messenger whom God has sent is One in high esteem with God. "The Father loves the Son." To show His great love of Him, He "has given all things into His hands." You have not, now, to deal with God out of Christ, for all things are now put under the mediatorial government of the Son of God. Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men, has all things in His power—the government is upon His shoulder. It has pleased the Father to put all things under the Man Christ Jesus—

"Life, death, and Hell, And worlds unknown Hung on His sacred will."

Jesus is absolute Master of all things. Angels fly and devils tremble at His nod and all the wheels of Providence revolve in perfect order according to His will. If you listen to His testimony of Grace, remember that He has all power to back it up and make it true to you. "He is able to save to the uttermost." All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. God has put all things under His feet—and He who is thus the Lord of All—has come to treat with you concerning reconciliation. Turn not on your heels, you busy men! Say not that you have no time to attend to Him! You must attend to One whose kingdom rules over all. Dare you treat Him with indifference? Will not the awe of His majesty constrain you to hearken to His voice?

Once more only. Concerning this Testifier, we learn that He is the Lord and Giver of life and if we will but accept His testimony we shall live thereby. He has life in Himself and He has power to quicken whomever He will. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." And to make the matter still more pressing, the word of warning is added, "He that believes not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." God can never be pleased with a person who gives the lie to His own Son. He has, in boundless pity, sent His Son, His only-begotten Son, to live and die that men might be saved—how shall He endure to see Him rejected? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And if this Son of His love is refused. If the guilty insult the Father by rejecting the Son, what can remain but righteous wrath? If a deed of mercy, unspeakable, immeasurable, comes to be despised by you, then the anger must abide upon you. There is no hope for those who refuse Jesus. Flatter not yourselves that there is another way of escape, in some future state, for if there could have been another way, God would not have given up His Son to shame, suffering and death! Faith in Jesus is the only door of hope! Shut that upon yourselves and you shut yourselves in utter darkness, in helpless, hopeless misery! What can help you if the wrath of God abides on you? This must mean a misery unspeakable, without the slightest alleviation. O my dear Hearers, I wish I had the power to set forth my Lord as the Witness! As I cannot do this as I would, I commend to you the passage of Scripture itself. The sentences are short, sharp, crisp, clear—and they show you who He is whom God has sent on the great errand of Divine love. Refuse Him not, I implore you!

II. Secondly, HEARKEN TO HIS TESTIMONY. What is the testimony of Jesus? What has the Christ to tell us concerning God? I will only use the three chapters which precede my text and I shall gather enough from them to give a fair outline of what Jesus tells us of the Father and His willingness to forgive and save. First, he tells us, God has provided an Atonement. Look at the 29th verse of the first chapter, where John says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." The very fact that the Son of God came here as Man to suffer for our sin proves that God has provided a great and all-sufficient Sacrifice.

God could not deal with a sinful world—it was too defiled with sin for Him to look upon it—but that sin of the world which prevented a holy God from dealing with a condemned race has been taken away by Jesus, so that now the Lord can visit man and favor him with the Gospel of peace and the work of salvation. This was necessary before a single individual could be saved. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The death of Jesus has enabled God to commune with men. Oh, hear this! There is a Sacrifice for sin! My Hearers, believe it and make much if it. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin! Jesus has died and in that death He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. All Believers are forgiven through His death. God is willing that you, believing in His dear Son, should be so forgiven as to be washed whiter than snow. That is Christ's testimony to you and he that receives it has set to his seal that God is true.

The next testimony of Jesus is that the Lord has made a way of access between man and God. Look at the 51st verse of the first chapter. He said to Nathanael, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the

Son of Man." Jacob's ladder is not now before you as a dream, but as a reality. The Son of Man, the Incarnate God, God in Christ Jesus, is the way by which there can be commerce between man and God. We can go up to God and the angels of God, loaded with blessings, can come down to men. The gulf is bridged—a glorious stairway has been made across the dread abyss which separated guilty man from his offended God. Jesus Christ Himself, in His own Person, is that ladder and He bears witness thereof to you. Sin is put away and distance is removed.

What is the next part of His testimony? You will find it in the third chapter—God is only to be approached in a spiritual way. To come to God, "you must be born again." That which is born of flesh is flesh and cannot commune with God, who is a Spirit. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and can commune with the holy God and understand spiritual things. My Hearers, there is no coming to God by a priest of human consecration! There is no coming by outward ritual, form, or ceremony—"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." You must have a spiritual Nature, that the Spirit of God may commune with you. Only by a spiritual Nature can you have communion with the great Invisible.

Your spirit can be in fellowship with God, the mighty Spirit, but what can you do till a spirit is created in you? This was our Lord's testimony to Nathanael and I suppose that, by some means, John the Baptist had heard of it. But whether he had or had not does not matter to my purpose at this time—it is certainly a part of the testimony of Jesus. Furthermore, our Lord bore testimony to the great fact that God gives salvation to all Believers in Jesus and to make that very plain, He puts it thus—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

You know the type. Bitten by the fiery serpents, the people looked to the bronze serpent and they were healed. Now, bitten by sin, you look to Him who was made sin for us and, looking to Him, your guilt passes away and the poison of your sinfulness meets its antidote. We look to Jesus and live! Our Lord bore witness to this with His own lips and then by the lips of His Apostles. He still cries, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Yes, there is life in a look at the Crucified One! Believing is receiving. Accept Christ, whom God sends as a Messenger to you and in accepting Him you shall be saved.

Jesus also testified plainly that from all who believe in Him the Lord has removed condemnation. It is written, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." He that believes is justified and, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Guilty and condemned as you may be at this hour, if you accept the Son of God to stand for you, you are not condemned! "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though by nature robed in rags, the Lord says, "Take away the filthy garments from him." Your glorious challenge is, "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died."

Oh, this message of mercy from Jesus, is it not full and blessed? If I had the time I should like to have enlarged much upon the testimony of God in Christ Jesus, but here it means just this, that you, being guilty and condemned, can be justly forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus! You may be beloved of God because of His love to Jesus. You may be delivered from all the evil results of sin because of the death of the Well-Beloved. You can be saved! Yes, if you now believe in Christ Jesus, you are saved. All heavenly privileges are yours now—where you now sit—and shall be

yours world without end. Glory be to God!

II. With great heaviness we have now to NOTICE THE REJECTERS— "No man receives His testimony." You would have thought that the moment this testimony was delivered to the world every man would have hastened to hear it and would have believed it with joyful readiness! But alas, the very reverse happened! If I went to fish with such bait as this, I should expect to have a sea full of fish rushing towards me, but it was not so. Men, as a rule, will not accept this heavenly salvation—no man will receive it except moved by God the Holy Spirit. Why is this? In the case of many, it is because they are earthly and the message and the messenger are too heavenly for them.

They are earth-bound and earth-buried. They are so busy—how can they consider the grand fact that God has come down to save men? They will think of that great spiritual Truth of God one of these days when they have made sufficient money and can retire—when they have nothing better to do than to attend to the claims of God. God is second-rate, no, seventh-rate in their esteem! They are really so occupied and their thoughts are so taken up with daily cares of this life that God's Grace must wait their convenience. I fear they will never be startled into thought until it is said of each one of them, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." The rich man had kept his eyes downward upon his sumptuous fare and had never looked up to heavenly things—but the realities of eternity have awakened him. O God, grant that none of my hearers may keep their eyes down until they lift them up in Hell!

Some rejecters of the Word of our Lord, I have no doubt, were too learned to believe in anything so simple as the statement that God was among them in human form to live and die for men. Though this is, in very truth, the most sublime of all mysteries, yet human pride counts it a small matter. It is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. Men know so much that they will not know God! I am struck every day, when reviewing books of the present period, with how wise fools are nowadays. Pardon me. I will put it differently and say—how foolish the wise are nowadays. I mean the same thing whichever way I say it. They get a hold of the tail of a dead thing and they shout like men that find great spoil! Here is a great discovery—a discovery of nothing!

At one time they find Deuteronomy to be a fraud. Now there are two Isaiahs. Then the book of Ruth was written far down in the centuries after the exile. Jonah is a myth. Esther is a romance and so forth. Their criticisms are all false, as others of the same breed soon show. They are always finding some dead oat or other and setting it out on the table where the children's bread ought to be. What mighty discoveries of mans' nests we have lived to see! Men of this nature will not receive the witness of Jesus—it is a pity that they should—He is honored by their rejection. You can scarcely read a book nowadays but you come across a bit of rotten stuff, the fondly-cherished nonsense of some writer who has a taste for that which is far gone in decay. They will not believe God. How can they while they receive honor one of another, as learned critics?

It is today as it was in our Lord's time, "not many wise men after the flesh are called." Still have we to ask, "Where are the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" Those who glory in fleshly wisdom cannot receive the testimony of the carpenter's Son—a testimony so plain that the poor and illiterate can understand it and enter into eternal life! I hope this will not be the case with any of the more cultured among you. Be willing to take Christ's yoke upon you and learn

of Him.

Certain people did not receive the testimony of Jesus because they were too proud. Pedigree and privilege kept many away. Read this verse in the first chapter—"He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Why? Because they thought they were God's own already! Did they not wear a text of Scripture between their eyes? Had they not broad fringes of blue on their dress? Did they not tithe mint, anise, cumin and other pennyworths of herbs? Did they not fast thrice in the week and so on? What did they want with Jesus? Those who professed to belong to God and cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," were too good to accept a Savior—too near to Heaven to need a Messenger from God.

But the real reason for rejecting the testimony of Jesus was this—they were too evil to receive it. Read verse 19—"Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Ah, my unbelieving Hearers, if you were better men you would more readily accept the light of Christ! If men were not such sinners as they are, they would come to Him to learn the way of the Lord. Alas, the depth of man's guilt has hardened his heart and darkened his perceptions—and made him prefer darkness to light! Men do not see that they need deliverance—they hear music in the rattle of their chairs. May the Spirit of God come and convict men of sin—and when they are once convicted of it and foresee their doom, they will change their minds towards the Savior and be willing to hear the message of Divine Grace!

May God, of His boundless Grace, save every man and woman and child to whom this sermon shall come! [And may He be as merciful to those who read this in the 21ST Century!] I am greatly pleased to see so many of you present on such a wet and stormy day as this—I hope the Lord means to bless you now that you are here. I remember going to the house of God one morning when there were only a few persons able to reach the place, there being a heavy snowstorm at the time. That morning I found the Savior by looking to Him upon the Cross and now I look with great interest upon services which are held in rough weather. I hope that those who have had the determination to come are more than common hearers—I trust that they have hearts that the Lord God has touched.

I hope you have come here with a desire to find salvation and if so, may you find it in the Lord Jesus at once! O Lord, grant it, I beseech You! All the while, remember, these rejecters of Christ were under the wrath of God. What a terrible condition! I will not dwell upon the awful fact, but let a man only know the meaning of these words and he will tremble in his seat—"He that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." O Souls, how can you bear it?

IV. We will conclude by speaking upon the fourth point. Let US COMMUNE WITH THOSE WHO RECEIVE CHRIST'S TESTIMONY. The text says, "He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true." To receive is, in still plainer Saxon, "to take in." There is here the idea of retaining as well as receiving. We take in the testimony of Jesus that it may abide in us. We hear what Jesus says and we answer to it, "Lord, I believe." Our word is, "Master, say on. Whatever You say, I believe." We take in all that Jesus witnesses and we hold to it. We believe and we keep on believing. We come to Jesus and we are always coming to Him.

Some people begin with believing in Jesus and then turn aside to believe in their own feelings, but you must not do so—you must believe and keep right on believing. The just shall live by faith. We receive Christ and keep on receiving Him. "He that receives His testimony." Do you refuse anything to which Jesus witnesses? This is evil! Receive His testimony with unquestioning faith. Some men will believe any monstrous assertion of scientists, or spiritualists, or rationalists—but they cannot believe the plain witness of the Lard Jesus Christ! The man who takes in the teaching of Jesus and keeps to it, he is the blessed man!

He takes in the testimony of Jesus for himself and receives it as his own possession. That Jesus saves from sin is true. That He saves me from sin is a more personal truth! Christ will save those who believe. This is good. But, "I believe and therefore I am saved," is better. Personal appropriation is the best receiving! Accept the Truth of Jesus for your own soul—seize it by the grip of a personal faith and then you have it! You have seen a boy with a burning-glass—he concentrates all the rays of the sun so as to produce a fire. Even so, by faith, concentrate the testimony of Jesus upon your own case and you will soon feel a wonderful power working in your soul! He that receives the testimony of Jesus makes it his own, feeds on it and is saved thereby.

Receivers of Christ's testimony allow nothing to make them doubt what He has said. When the Believer is down in the dumps and is passing through a dark time, he says, "What Jesus has said is true for all this. He has told me that if I believe in Him I have eternal life and I have it, however gloomy things may appear. I have a sluggish liver and it makes me feel low and miserable, but I have eternal life! My wife is sick to death and I have buried child after child and lost friend after friend—but I have eternal life! God's waves and billows go over me, but I have eternal life, for He says it and I cannot doubt Him." It is a grand thing to have your confidence outside yourself! It is glorious to have it all in Christ!

As long as you keep your confidence in your own self it will be a very poor stay for you. There is a ship at sea and a foolish landsman feels very confident of the safety of the vessel because they have a big anchor on board. My dear Man, what is the good of that anchor while it is on board? It would rather tend to sink the ship by its weight than to be of service to it. "Oh," he says, "but it is one of the best Admiralty anchors and we are safe while that is on board!"

O simple Soul, an anchor is of no use while you can see it! Drop it down into the deep sea, out of sight, and then it will be of service. Hear the chain run out! Now the anchor is far down. It grips and holds the vessel. You must fix your confidence within the veil. Your anchorage of hope must be where mortal eyes can never see. Our rest lies in simply believing the Word of the Lord Jesus. I believe it though I do not feel it. I believe it though I cannot argue the matter out logically. I believe it because God says it to me through His great Witness, the Lord Jesus Christ. The foregoing will enable you to see the truth of the statement, "He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true."

In the olden time men did not often write their names because they could not write at all! Even kings set their seals because they could not give a signature. To this day, how often does it happen to me, as a trustee to a chapel or a school, to have a paper laid before me and I not only sign my name, but I put my finger on that red wafer which represents my seal and I say, "This is my act and deed"? When you believe in Jesus you have set your seal to the testimony of Jesus, which is the Revelation of the Lord. You have certified that you believe in God as true. What does

that mean? It means not only that He has kept His promise as made to the fathers in the Old Testament and will keep it in Christ Jesus, but it means, also, that to you God is real. By faith in Jesus you have come to know the reality of God.

Before, you talked about an unknown God, but now you know Him and declare your faith in His reality and fidelity. Now you perceive substance and not shadow. Now you see mystery, but not myth. God is Truth and all that Jesus said of Him is Truth. He says, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," and you find that God is true, for you live in newness of life! Jesus says, "He that believes on Him is not condemned," and you know it is so, for you enjoy a sense of pardoned sin! You have sealed the testimony of God by resting your own soul upon it. It seems a very joyful thing to me that I should be allowed to be a witness to the Truth of God. I feel honored by being allowed to subscribe my name to the testimony of Jesus.

Can you not do the same? Remember what it involves. You doubting Christians, what are you doing? You have already put your hand and seal to the promise of God and are you going to contradict your own signature and seal? When you first believed in Jesus you set to your seal that God is true. And now, because you have met with a little trouble, are you going to retract your witness? Do you fear that the Lord will not help you and save you? What are we to understand by that seal of yours? Is it, after all, untrue, or unreal? You know better! Shame on you for contradicting yourself! Remember, when you make God a liar you make yourself a liar, for you have already set your hand and seal to it that God is true—and seals and handwritings remain. You accepted the real Savior for your real sin and you believed in the real death of Christ for you—are you going to run back? Will you doubt your Lord after this?

God grant you may not, but, on the contrary, may you go on confirming the testimony of Jesus and setting it to your seal again and again that God is true! Give glory to God believing that what He has promised He is able also to perform. Never stagger at the promise through unbelief. All the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us—why, we set to our seal that God is true!

I have done, when I have said just this. Avoid, dear Hearers, anxiously, the double sin of unbelief. If you do not believe Jesus, you do not believe God. If you reject His Son, you reject Him. If you give the lie to the teaching of Christ, you give the lie to God. Flee from this deadly sin! Note well the simple matter upon which eternal life depends. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." He has it now. It is in his heart now and it is not for a time, for it is everlasting life. Note that as soon as a man believes God, he sets to his seal that God is true and then away flies all suspicion of his God!

Our sins are largely caused by our mistrust of God. You think that God denies you something that would be good for you and therefore you go and take it. You suspect God of being so cruel as to command you to do that which is to your injury and so you refuse to obey Him. Now if you believe that God is true, you will from now on give up what He bids you give up because you feel that it is well to do so. And you will act as He bids you because you are sure His command is wise and good. Between you and God there will be, from now on, a holy confidence—and what will that lead to? It will lead to holiness of life and earnest seeking to please God in whom you unreservedly believe.

You will love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, now that confidence is created. See what a change faith makes! Have you ever heard of a servant who believed hard things of her mistress? She thought her a tyrant and resolved that she would do nothing to please her. When she did her work, she did it very badly and thought it was quite good enough for such a creature as her mistress. But she heard something about her which entirely changed her opinion. Instead of thinking her a demon, she judged her to be little less than an angel! It might have seemed a small matter, but it was not so. She did her work zealously and gladly now that her suspicions were ended. Faith in her mistress affected her whole life.

So is it in spiritual things! Faith in Christ Jesus is the fountain of obedience, the ensign of a change of heart. God grant it to you all! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURES READ BEFORE SERMON—John 3:13-36.

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John 3,36 #1012 - The Unbeliever's Unhappy Conditi

Sermon #1012 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE UNBELIEVER'S UNHAPPY CONDITION

NO. 1012

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that believes not the Son shall not see life.

But the wrath of God abides on him."

John 3:36.

THIS is a part of a discourse by John the Baptist. We have not many

sermons by that mighty preacher, but we have just sufficient to prove that he knew how to lay the axe at the root of the tree by preaching the Law of God most unflinchingly. And also that he knew how to declare the Gospel, for no one could have uttered sentences which more clearly contain the way of salvation than those in the text before us. Indeed, this third chapter of the Gospel according to the Evangelist John is notable among clear and plain Scriptures—notable for being yet clearer and more plain than almost any other.

John the Baptist was evidently a preacher who knew how to discriminate—a point in which so many fail—he separated between the precious and the vile, and therefore he was as God's mouth to the people. He does not address them as all lost nor as all saved, but he shows the two classes. He keeps up the line of demarcation between him that fears God and him that fears Him not. He plainly declares the privileges of the Believer. He says he has even now eternal life. And with equal decision he testifies to the sad state of the unbeliever—"he shall not see life. But the wrath of God abides on him."

John the Baptist might usefully instruct many professedly Christian preachers. Although he that is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist, and ought, therefore, more clearly to bear witness to the Truth, yet, there are many who muddle the Gospel, who teach philosophy, who preach a mingle-mangle which is neither Law nor Gospel. And these might well go to the school of this rough preacher of the wilderness, and learn from him how to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world."

I desire this morning to take a leaf out of the Baptist's lesson book. I would preach as he did the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear." It is my earnest desire to enjoy the delight of expounding to you the deep things of God. I feel a profound pleasure in opening up

the blessings of the Covenant of Grace and bringing forth out of its treasury things new and old. I should be very happy to dwell upon the types of the Old Testament, and even to touch upon the prophecies of the New. But, while so many yet remain unsaved, my heart is never content except when I am preaching simply the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My dear unconverted Hearers, when I see you brought to Christ I will then advance beyond the rudiments of the Gospel! Meanwhile, while Hell is gaping wide, and many of you will certainly help to fill it, I cannot turn aside from warning you. I dare not resist the sacred impulse which constrains me to preach over and over again to you the glad tidings of salvation. I shall, like John, continue laying the axe at the root of the trees and shall not go beyond crying, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." As he did, we shall now declare the sad estate of him who believes not the Son of God.

This morning, with the burden of the Lord upon us, we shall speak upon the words of the text. Our first point shall be a discovery of the guilty one, "he that believes not the Son." Next, we shall consider his offense. It lies in "not believing the Son." Thirdly, we shall lay bare the sinful causes which create this unbelief. And, fourthly we shall show the terrible result of not believing in the Son—"he shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." May the Spirit help us in all.

I. To begin, then, who is THE GUILTY ONE? Who is the unhappy man spoken of here? Is he a person to be met with only once in a century? Must we search the crowds through and through to find an individual in this miserable plight? Ah, no. The persons who are here spoken of are common. They abound even in our holy assemblies. They are to be met with by thousands in our streets. Alas, alas, they form the vast majority of the world's population! Jesus has come unto His own and His own have not received Him. The Jewish race remain unbelieving—while the Gentiles, to whom He was to be a Light—prefer to sit in darkness and reject His brightness.

We shall not be talking, this morning, upon a recondite theme with only a remote relation to ourselves. There are many here of whom we shall be speaking, and we devoutly pray that the Word of God may come with power to their souls. The persons here spoken of are those who believe not the Son of God. Jesus Christ, out of infinite mercy, has come into the world, has taken upon Himself our nature, and in that nature has suffered—the Just for the unjust—to bring us to God. By reason of His sufferings, the Gospel message is now proclaimed to all men, and they are honestly assured that, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

The unhappy persons in this text will not believe in Jesus Christ—they reject God's way of mercy. They hear the Gospel, but refuse obedience to its command. Let it not be imagined that these individuals are necessarily avowed skeptics, for many of them believe much of the revealed Truth of God. They believe the Bible to be the Word of God. They believe there is a God. They believe that Jesus Christ is come into the world as a Savior. They believe most of the doctrines which cluster around the Cross. Alas, they may do this, but yet the wrath of God abides on them if they believe not the Son of God!

It may surprise you to learn that many of these persons are very much interested in orthodoxy. They believe that they have discovered the Truth and they exceedingly value those discoveries, so that they frequently grow very warm in temper with those who differ from them. They have read much and they are masters of argument in the defense of what they consider to be sound doctrine.

They cannot endure heresy—and yet, sad is the fact that believing what they do, and knowing so much—they have not believed the Son of God! They believe the doctrine of election, but they have not the faith of God's elect. They swear by final perseverance, but persevere in unbelief. They confess all the five points of Calvinism but they have not come to the one most necessary point of looking unto Jesus that they may be saved.

They accept in creed the Truths of God that are assuredly believed among us, but they have not received that faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. At any rate, they have not received it personally and practically for their souls' salvation. It must be admitted that not a few of these persons are blameless as to their morals. You could not, with close observation, find either dishonesty, falsehood, uncleanness, or malice in their outward life. They are not only free from these blots, but they manifest positive excellences. Much of their character is commendable. They frequently are courteous and compassionate, generous and gentle-minded.

Often times they are so amiable and admirable that, while looking upon them, we understand how our Lord, in a similar case, loved the young man who asked, "what do I lack?" The one thing necessary they are destitute of is they have not believed in Christ Jesus, and loath as the Savior was to see them perish, yet it cannot be helped—one doom is common to all who believe not. They shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them.

In many cases these persons are, in addition to their morality, religious persons after a fashion. They would not absent themselves from the usual service of the place of worship. They are most careful to respect Sundays. They venerate the Book of God. They use a form of prayer, they join in the songs of the Sanctuary. They sit as God's people sit, and stand as God's people stand. But, alas, there is a worm in the center of that fair fruit— they have missed the one essential thing, which, being omitted, brings certain ruin—they have not believed on the Son of God.

Ah, how far a man may go, and yet, for lack of this one thing, the wrath of God may still abide upon him! Beloved of parents who are hopeful of the conversion of their boy. Esteemed by Christians who cannot but admire his outward conversation, yet for all that, the young man may be under the frown of God, for "God is angry with the wicked every day." The wrath of God abides on the man, whoever he may be, that has not believed in Jesus!

Now, if our text showed that the wrath of God was resting on the culprits in our jails, most persons would assent to the statement and none would wonder at it. If our text declared that the wrath of God abides upon persons who live in habitual unchastity and constant violation of all the laws of order and respectability-most men would say, "Amen." But the text is aimed at another character. It is true that God's wrath does rest upon open sinners. But, oh Sirs, this, too, is true—the wrath of God abides upon those who boast of their virtues but have not believed in Jesus, His Son!

They may dwell in palaces—but if they are not Believers—the wrath of God abides on them. They may sit in the senate house and enjoy the acclamations of the nation—but if they believe not on the Son—the wrath of God abides on them. Their names may be enrolled in the peerage and they may possess countless wealth—but the wrath of God abides on them—if they believe not on the Son of God. They may be habitual in their charities, and abundant in external acts of devotion—but if they have not accepted the appointed Savior, the Word of God bears witness

that—"the wrath of God abides on them."

II. Now let us, with our hearts awakened by God's Spirit, try to think upon THEIR OFFENSE. What is this peculiar sin which entails the wrath of God upon these people? It is that they have not believed the Son of God. What does that amount to? It amounts to this, first of all, that they refuse to accept the mercy of God. God made a Law, and His creatures were bound to respect and obey it. We rejected it, and turned aside from it. It was a great display of the heart's hatred, but it was not, in some respects, so thoroughly and intensely wicked a manifestation of enmity to God as when we reject the Gospel of Grace.

God has now presented not the Law, but the Gospel to us. He has said—"My Creatures, you have broken My Law. You have acted very vilely towards Me. I must punish your sin, else I were not God, and I cannot lay aside My justice. But I have devised a way by which, without any injury to any of My attributes, I can have mercy upon you. I am ready to forgive the past and to restore you to more than your lost position, so that you shall be My sons and my daughters. My only command to you is believe in My Son. If this command is obeyed, all the blessings of My new Covenant shall be yours. Trust Him and follow Him, for, behold, I give Him as a Leader and Commander to the people. Accept Him as making Atonement by His Substitution, and obey Him."

Now, to reject the Law of God shows an evil heart of unbelief. But who shall say what a depth of rebellion must dwell in that heart which refuses not only the yoke of God, but even the gift of God? The provision of a Savior for lost men is the free gift of God! By it all our wants are supplied, all our evils are removed, peace on earth is secured to us, and Glory forever with God—the rejection of this gift cannot be a small sin! The All-Seeing One, when He beholds men spurning the supreme gift of His love, cannot but regard such rejection as the worst proof of the hatred of their hearts against Himself.

When the Holy Spirit comes to convict men of sin, the special sin which He brings to light is thus described—"Of sin, because they believed not on Me." Not because the heathen were licentious in their habits, barbarians in their ways, and bloodthirsty in their spirit. No—"Of sin, because they believe not on Me." Condemnation has come upon men, but what is the condemnation? "That Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than Light, because their deeds are evil." Remember, also, that expressive text—"He that believes not is condemned already." And what is he condemned for! "Because he has not believed in the name of the onlybegotten Son of God."

Let me remark, further, that in the rejection of Divine Mercy as presented in Christ, the unbeliever has displayed an intense venom against God, for observe how it is. He must either receive the mercy of God in Christ, or he must be condemned—there is no other alternative. He must trust Christ whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin, or else he must be driven from the Presence of God into eternal punishment. The unbeliever in effect says, "I had sooner be damned than I would accept God's mercy in Christ." Can we conceive a grosser insult to the infinite compassion of the great Father? Suppose a man has injured another, grossly insulted him—and that repeatedly. And yet the injured person, finding the man at last brought into a wretched and miserable state, goes to him and simply out of kindness to him, says, "I freely forgive you all the wrong you ever did me, and I am ready to relieve your poverty, and to succor you in your distress." Suppose the other replies, "No, I would sooner rot than take anything from you." Would not you

have in such a resolve a clear proof of the intense enmity that existed in his heart?

And so when a man says, and every one of you unbelievers do practically say so, "I would sooner lie forever in Hell than honor Christ by trusting Him," this is a very plain proof of your hatred of God and His Christ. Unbelievers hate God. Let me ask for what do you hate Him? He keeps the breath within your nostrils. He it is that gives you food and clothing, and sends fruitful seasons. For which of these good things do you hate Him? You hate Him because He is good. Ah, then, it must be because you, yourself, are evil—and your heart very far removed from righteousness. May God grant that this great and crying sin may be clearly set before your eyes by the light of the Eternal Spirit! And may, by His Grace, you repent of it, and turn from your unbelief and live this day!

But yet further, the unbeliever touches God in a very tender place by his unbelief. No doubt it was to the great Maker a joyous thing to fashion this world, but there are no expressions of joy concerning it at all equal to the joy of God in the matter of human redemption. We would be guarded when we speak of Him, but as far as we can tell, the gift of His dear Son to men, and the whole scheme of redemption is the master work even of God Himself. He is infinite in POWER, and wisdom, and love. His ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth. But Scripture, I think, will warrant me in saying—

"That in the Grace which rescued man His brightest form of Glory shines. Here on the Cross it is fairest writ, In precious blood and crimson lines."

Now, the man who says, "There is no God" is a fool. But he who denies God the glory of redemption, in addition to his folly, has robbed the Lord of the choicest jewel of His regalia and aimed a deadly blow at the Divine honor. I may say of him who despises the great salvation, that, in despising Christ, he touches the apple of God's eye. "This is My Beloved Son," says God, "hear Him." Out of Heaven He says it, and yet men stop their ears and say, "We will not have Him." No, they wax wrath against the Cross and turn away from God's salvation. Do you think that God will always bear this? The times of your ignorance He has winked at, but, "now commands all men everywhere to repent."

Will you stand out against His love? His love that has been so inventive in ingenious plans by which to bless the sons of men? Shall His choicest work be utterly despised by you? If so, it is little wonder that it is written, "The wrath of God abides on him." I must, still further, unveil this matter by saying that the unbeliever perpetrates an offense against every Person of the blessed Trinity. He may think that his not believing is a very small business, but, indeed, it is a barbed shaft shot against the Deity. Take the Persons of the blessed Trinity, beginning with the Son of God who comes to us most nearly. It is to me the most surprising thing I ever heard of that, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." I do not wonder that in Hindustan the missionaries are often met with this remark—"It is too good to be true that God ever took upon Himself the nature of such a thing as man!" Yet, more wonderful does it seem to be that, when Christ became Man, He took all the sorrows and infirmity of man, and, in addition, was made to bear the sin of many. The most extraordinary of all facts is this—that the infinitely Holy should be "numbered with the transgressors," and, in the words of Isaiah, should "bear their iniquities."

The Lord has made Him who knew no sin, to be made sin for us. Wonder of wonders! It is beyond all degree amazing that He who distributes crowns and thrones should hang on a tree and

die—the Just for the unjust—bearing the punishment due to sinners for guilt. Now, knowing this, as most of you do, and yet refusing to believe, you do, in effect, say, "I do not believe that the Incarnate God can save." "Oh no," you reply, "we sincerely believe that He can save." Then it must be that you feel, "I believe He can, but I will not have Him save me." Wherein I excuse you in the first place, I must bring the accusation more heavily in the second.

You answer that "you do not say you will not believe Him." Why do you, then, reMal. in unbelief? The fact is you do not trust Him—you will not obey Him. I pray you account for the fact. "May I believe Him?" asks one. Have we not told you ten thousand times over that whoever will, may take the Water of Life freely? If there is any barrier, it is not with God, it is not with Christ—it is with your own sinful heart. You are welcome to the Savior now, and if you trust Him now He is yours forever.

But oh, Unbeliever, it appears to be nothing to you that Christ has died! His wounds attract you not. His groans for His enemies have no music in them to you. You turn your back upon the Incarnate God who bleeds for men, and in so doing you shut yourselves out of hope, judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Furthermore, the willful rejection of Christ is also an insult to God the Father. "He that believes not has made God a liar, because he has not believed the record that God gave of His Son." God has Himself often borne testimony to His dear Son. "Him has God the Father set forth to be a Propitiation for our Sins."

In rejecting Christ, you reject God's testimony and God's gift. It is a direct assault upon the truthfulness and loving kindness of the gracious Father when you trample on or cast aside His priceless, peerless gift of love. And, as for the blessed Spirit, it is His office here below to bear witness to Christ. In the Christian ministry, the Holy Spirit daily cries to the sons of men to come to Jesus. He has strived in the hearts of many of you, given you a measure of conviction of sin, and a degree of knowledge of the glory of Christ—but you have repressed it—you have labored to your utmost to do despite to the Spirit of God.

Believe me, this is no slight sin. An unbeliever is an enemy to God the Father, to God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Against the blessed Trinity in Unity, O Unbeliever, your sin is a standing insult—you are now to God's face insulting Him by continuing an unbeliever. And, I must add that there is also in unbelief an insult against every attribute of God. The unbeliever in effect declares, "If the justice of God is seen in laying the punishment of sin upon Christ—I do not care for His justice—I will bear my own punishment." The sinner seems to say, "God is merciful in the gift of Christ to suffer in our place—I do not want His mercy—I can do without it. Others may be guilty, and they may trust in the Redeemer, but I do not feel such guilt and I will not ask for pardon."

Unbelievers attack the wisdom of God, for, whereas the wisdom of God is in its fullness revealed in the gift of Jesus, they say, "It is a dogma, unphilosophical and worn out." They count the wisdom of God to be foolishness, and thus cast a slight upon another of the Divine attributes. I might in detail mention every one of the attributes and prerogatives of God, and prove that your refusal of the Savior is an insult to every one of them, and to God Himself—but the theme is too sad for us to continue upon it. Therefore let us pass to another phase of the subject, though I fear it will be equally grievous.

III. Thirdly, let us consider THE CAUSES OF THIS UNBELIEF. In a great many, unbelief may be ascribed to a careless ignorance of the way of salvation. Now I should not wonder if many of you

imagine that if you do not understand the Gospel, you are therefore quite excused for not believing it. But, Sirs, it is not so! You are placed in this world, not as heathens in the center of Africa, but in enlightened England, where you live in the full blaze of Gospel days. There are places of worship all around you, which you can without difficulty attend. The Book of God is very cheap— you have it in your houses. You can all read it or hear it read.

Is it so, then, that the King has been pleased to reveal Himself to you, and tell you the way to salvation, and yet you, at the age of twenty, thirty, or forty, do not know the way of salvation? What do you mean, Sir? What can you mean? Has God been pleased to reveal Himself in Scripture—tell you how to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven—and yet have you been too idle to inquire into that way? Dare you say to God, "I do not think it worth my while to learn what You have revealed, neither do I care to know of the gift which You have bestowed on men." How can you think that such ignorance is an excuse for your sin? What could be a more gross aggravation of it?

If you do not know, you ought to know. If you have not learned the Gospel message, you might have learned it—for there are some of us whose language it is not difficult for even the most illiterate to understand, and who would, if we caught ourselves using a hard word, retract it, and put it into little syllables so that not even a child's intellect need be perplexed by our language. Salvation's way is plain in the Book. Those words—"Believe and live"—are in this Christian England almost as legible and as universally to be seen as though they were printed on the sky. That trust in the Lord Jesus saves the soul is well-known news.

But, if you still say you have not known all this, then I reply, "Dear Sir, do try to know it. Go to the Scriptures, study them, see what is there. Hear, also, the Gospel, for it is written, "Incline your ear to come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." For your soul's sake I charge you, be no longer ignorant of that which you must know, or else must perish. In some others, the cause is indifference. They do not think the matter to be of any very great consequence. They are aware that they are not quite right, but they have a notion that somehow or other they will get right at last. And meanwhile, it does not trouble them.

Oh Man, I pray you, as your fellow creature, let me speak with you a word of expostulation. God declares that His wrath abides upon you as an unbeliever, and do you call that nothing? God says, "I am angry with you," and you say to Him, "I do not care, it is of very small importance to me. The rise or fall of the government bonds is of much more consequence than whether God is angry with me or not. My dinner being done to a turn concerns me a great deal more than whether the Infinite God loves me or hates me."

That is the English of your conduct, and I put it to you whether there can be a higher impertinence against your Creator, or a direr form of arrogant revolt against the eternal Ruler? If it does not trouble you that God is angry with you, it ought to trouble you! It troubles me that it does not trouble you. We have heard of persons guilty of murder whose behavior during the trial has been cool and self-possessed. The coolness with which they pleaded, "not guilty," has been all of a piece with the hardness of tears which led them to the bloody deed. He who is capable of great crime is also incapable of shame concerning it. A man who is able to take pleasure and be at ease while God is angry with him shows that his heart is harder than steel.

In certain cases, the root of this unbelief lies in another direction. It is fed by pride. The person who is guilty of it does not believe that he needs a Savior. His notion is that he will do his very best, attend the Church or the meeting house very regularly, subscribe occasionally or frequently, and go to Heaven partly by what he does, and partly by the merits of Christ. So that not believing in Christ is not a matter of any great consequence with him because he is not naked, and poor, and miserable. He is rich, and increased in goods in spiritual things. To be saved by faith is a religion for harlots, and drunkards, and thieves. But for respectable persons such as he is, who have kept the Law from their youth up, he does not see any particular need of laying hold upon Christ. Such conduct reminds me of the words of Cowper—

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred, And the fool with it that insults his Lord."

God believed it necessary, in order to save man, that the Redeemer should die. Yet you self-righteous ones evidently think that death a superfluity—for if a man could save himself, why did the Lord descend and die to save him? If there is a way to Heaven by respectability and morality without Christ, what is the good of Christ? It is utterly useless to have an expiator and a Mediator, if men are so good that they do not require them. You tell God to His face that He lies to you, that you are not so sinful as He would persuade you, that you do not need a Substitute and Sacrifice as He says you do. Oh, Sirs, this pride of yours is an arrogant rebellion against God! Look at your fine actions, you that are so good—your motives are base, your pride over what you have done has defiled, with black fingers, all your acts. In as much as you prefer your way to God's way, and prefer your righteousness to God's righteousness, the wrath of God abides on you. Perhaps I have not hit the reason of your unbelief, therefore let me speak some more. In many, love of sin, rather than any boasted selfrighteousness keeps them from the Savior. They do not believe in Jesus because they have any doubt about the truths of Christianity, but because they have an enslaving love for their favorite sin. "Why," says one, "if I were to believe in Christ, of course, I must obey Him—to trust and to obey go together. Then I could not be the drunkard I am, I could not trade as I do, I could not practice secret licentiousness, I could not frequent the haunts of the ungodly where laughter is occasioned by sin, and mirth by blasphemy. I cannot give up these my darling sins."

Perhaps, this sinner hopes that one day, when he cannot any longer enjoy his sin, he will meanly sneak out of it and try to cheat the devil of his soul. But meanwhile he prefers the pleasures of sin to obedience to God, and unbelief to acceptance of his salvation. O sweet Sin! O bitter Sin! How are you murdering the souls of men! As certain serpents before they strike their prey fix their eyes upon it and fascinate it, and then at last devour it, so does sin fascinate the foolish sons of Adam. They are charmed with it, and perish for it. It yields but a momentary joy, and the wage thereof is eternal misery, yet are men enamored of it.

The ways of the strange woman, and the paths of uncleanness lead most plainly to the chambers of death—yet are men attracted to them as moths to the blaze of the candle—and so are they destroyed. Alas, that men wantonly dash against the rocks of dangerous lusts and perish willfully beneath the enchantment of sin! Sad pity it is to prefer a harlot to the eternal God, to prefer a few pence made by dishonesty to Heaven itself, to prefer the gratification of the belly to the love of the Creator, and the joy of being reconciled and saved. It was a dire insult to God when Israel set up a golden calf, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel."

Shall the image of an ox that eats grass supplant the living God! He that had strewn the earth with manna, had made Sinai to smoke with His Presence, and the whole wilderness to tremble beneath His marching—is He to be thrust aside by the image of a bullock that has horns and hoofs? Will men prefer molten metal to the infinitely holy and glorious Jehovah? But, surely, the preference of a lust, to God, is a greater insult still—to obey our passions rather than His will, and to prefer sin to His mercy— this is the crime of crimes. May God deliver us from it, for His mercy's sake.

IV. We have heavy tidings in the last head of my discourse, THE TERRIBLE RESULT of unbelief. "He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." "The wrath of God!" No words can ever fully explain this expression. Holy Whitfield, when he was preaching, would often hold up his hands, and, with tears streaming down his eyes, would exclaim, "Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!"

Then he would pause because his emotions checked his utterance. The wrath of God! I confess I feel uneasy if anybody is angry with me, and yet one can bear the auger of foolish, hot-tempered persons with some equanimity. But the wrath of God is the anger of One who is never angry without a cause. One who is very patient and long suffering. It takes much to bring anger into Jehovah's face, yet is He angry with unbelievers. He is never angry with anything because it is feeble and little, but only because it is wrong.

His anger is only His holiness set on fire. He cannot bear sin! Who would wish that He should? What right-minded man would desire God to be pleased with evil? That were to make a devil of God! Because He is God, He must be angry with sin wherever it is. This makes the sting of it—that His wrath is just and holy anger. It is the anger, remember, of an Omnipotent Being who can crush us as easily as a moth. It is the anger of an Infinite Being, and therefore Infinite anger, the heights and depths and breadths and lengths of which no man can measure. Only the Incarnate God ever fully knew the power of God's anger. It is beyond all conception, yet the anger rests on you, my Hearer. Alas for you, if you are an unbeliever, for this is your state before God! It is no fiction of mine, but the Word of inspired Truth—"the wrath of God abides on him."

Then notice the next word, it "abides." This is to say, it is upon you now. He is angry with you at this moment—and always. You go to sleep with an angry God gazing into your face. You wake in the morning, and if your eyes were not dim you would perceive His frowning countenance. He is angry with you, even when you are singing His praises, for you mock Him with solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue. He is angry with you on your knees, for you only pretend to pray—you utter words without heart. As long as you are not a Believer, He must be angry with you every moment. "God is angry with the wicked every day." That the text says it abides, and the present tense takes a long sweep, for it always will abide on you.

But may you not, perhaps, escape from it, by ceasing to exist? The test precludes such an idea. Although it says that you, "shall not see life," it teaches that God's wrath is upon you so that the absence of life is not annihilation. Spiritual life belongs only to Believers. You are now without that life, yet you exist, and wrath abides on you, and so it ever must be. While you shall not see life, you shall exist in eternal death, for the wrath of God cannot abide on a non-existent creature. You shall not see life, but you shall feel wrath to the uttermost. It is horror enough that wrath should be on you now—it is horror upon horrors, and Hell upon Hell— that it shall be upon you forever! And notice that it must be so because you reject the only thing that can heal you.

As George Herbert says, "Whom oils and balsams kill, what salve can cure?" If Christ Himself has become a savor of death unto death to you, because you reject Him—how can you be saved? There is but one door, and if you close it by your unbelief, how can you enter Heaven? There is one healing medicine, and if you refuse to take it, what remains but death? There is one Water of Life, but you refuse to drink it. Then must you thirst forever. You put from you, voluntarily, the one only Redeemer— how, then, shall you be ransomed? Shall Christ die again, and in another state be offered to you once more?

O Sirs, you would reject Him then as you reject Him now! There remains no more sacrifice for sin. On the Cross God's mercy to the sons of men was fully revealed—and will you reject God's ultimatum of Grace— His last appeal to you? If so, it is at your own peril—Christ being raised from the dead dies no more. He shall come again, but without a sin offering unto the salvation of His people. Remember, Sirs, that the wrath of God will produce no saving or softening effect. It has been suggested that a sinner, after suffering God's wrath awhile, may repent, and so escape from it. But our observation and experience prove that the wrath of God never softened anybody's heart yet, and we believe it never will—those who are suffering Divine wrath will go on to harden, and harden, and harden.

The more they suffer, the more they will hate—the more they are punished, the more will they sin. The wrath of God abiding on you will produce no good results in you, but rather you shall go from evil to evil, further and further from the Presence of God. The reason why the wrath of God abides on an unbeliever is partly because all his other sins remain on him. There is no sin that shall damn the man who believes, and nothing can save the man who will not believe. God removes all sin the moment we believe. But while we believe not, fresh cords fasten upon us our transgressions. The sin of Judah is written as with an iron pen, and engraved with a point of a diamond. Nothing can release you from guilt while your heart remains at enmity with Jesus Christ your Lord.

Remember that God has never taken an oath, that I know of, against any class of persons, except unbelievers. "To whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?" Continued unbelief God never will forgive, because His Word binds Him not to do so. Does He swear an oath, and shall He go back from it? It cannot be! O that you might have Grace to relinquish your unbelief, and close in with the Gospel and be saved!

Now, I hear someone object, "You tell us that certain people are under the wrath of God, but they are very prosperous." I reply that yonder bullock will be slaughtered. Yet it is being fattened. And your prosperity, O ungodly Man, is but a fattening of you for the slaughter of justice. Yes, but you say, "They are very merry, and some of those who are forgiven are very sad." Mercy lets them be merry while they may. We have heard of men who, when driven to Tyburn in a cart, could drink and laugh as they went to the gallows. It only proved what bad men they were. And so, whereas the guilty can yet take comfort, it only proves their guiltiness.

Let me ask what ought to be your thoughts concerning these solemn Truths of God which I have delivered to you? I know what my thoughts were. They made me go to my bed unhappy. They made me very grateful because I hope I have believed in Jesus Christ. Yet they made me start in the night, and wake this morning with a load upon me. I come here to say to you—must it be so that you will always remain unbelievers and abide under the wrath of God? If it must be so, and the dread conclusion seems forced upon me, at any rate, to look it in the face, to consider it. If you are

resolved to be damned, know what you are doing. Take advice and consider.

O Sirs, it cannot need an argument to convince you that it is a most wretched thing to be now under the wrath of God? You cannot want any argument to show that it must be a blessed thing to be forgiven—you must see that! It is not your reason that wants convincing—it is your heart that wants renewing. The whole Gospel in a nutshell is this: Come, you guilty One, just as you are, and rest yourself upon the finished work of the Savior, and take Him to be yours forever. Trust Jesus now. In your present position it may be done. God's Holy Spirit, blessing your mind, you may at this moment say, "Lord, I believe, help you my unbelief."

You may now confide in Jesus, and some who came in here unforgiven, may make the angels sing because they go down yonder steps saved souls—whose transgressions are forgiven—and whose sins are covered! God knows that if I knew by what study and what art I could learn to preach the Gospel so as to affect your hearts I would spare no cost or pains. For the present I have aimed simply to warn you, not with adornment of speech, lest the power should be the power of man.

And now I leave my message, and commit it to Him who shall judge the quick and the dead. But this know, if you receive not the Son, I shall be a swift witness against you! God grant it be not so, for His mercy's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 3:1-19.

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